



THE INDEPENDENT

N° 8,162

SATURDAY 7 DECEMBER 1996

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The abyss

Major loses his majority after MP's protest

Worst Tory week since the fall of Thatcher

It's time for them to go, says Tony Blair

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

The Government lost its Commons majority for the first time since 1979 last night when the Tory backbencher Sir John Gort "withdrew co-operation" in protest over the threatened closure of a hospital casualty unit in his constituency.

Summing up the worst Tory week since the dying days of Margaret Thatcher's premiership, the Labour leader Tony Blair said the Government was "disintegrating before our eyes". He told *The Independent* that the Tories had reached a crunch-point, with John Major and his Chancellor locked in combat over the European single currency.

"We have reached a decisive moment," he said, "when you have the Chancellor effectively fighting the Prime Minister, and one part of the Conservative Party trying to pull another part in the other direction."

"They are not capable of being led; they are not capable of governing with any coherence, any leadership, in any direction. John Major wants to go one way and is being blown in another. Watch out for him trying to tack to a different direction, saying he is not very keen on the single currency."

A whole host of Cabinet ministers yesterday protested that would not happen, while Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, insisted there

was no question of Kenneth Clarke being sacked as Chancellor.

Mr Major used a more curious form of words, saying: "If the Chancellor didn't enjoy my full support, he wouldn't be Chancellor. Of course he does."

With the latest Gallup poll in yesterday's *Daily Telegraph* giving a thumbs-down to the Budget, and a thundering Labour lead of 37 points, the prevailing atmosphere of Westminster crisis and Whitehall panic was compounded by the Prime Minister's decision to deliver a 50-minute live interview to BBC

chamber on the entry terms for the single currency. Beyond that internal Tory battle, however, the hard political reality is that the Government's ability to get its business through the Commons is now at risk.

No 10 and Mr Heseltine last night disputed reports that Sir John had formally resigned the Conservative whip, which would turn the Government majority of one into a one-vote minority.

However, the MP's withdrawal of co-operation does in effect wipe out the overall majority, which would have happened anyway next week

ment. It is very important because Sir John is an experienced politician. He would have drafted those words carefully.

"He has not resigned the whip. If he decides to do that, that is another matter."

That view appeared to be supported by Sir John's own words at a Commons press conference, when he said: "If the Government was to try to discipline me in some way, that might provoke what in industrial relations terms mean 'an all-out situation'."

However, Sir John, who has been fighting to save the Edgware General Hospital casualty unit that serves his Hendon North constituency, in north London, said: "I don't put the survival of my party above the survival of individuals whose lives may be put at risk."

But Mr Heseltine refused to offer any expectation of a ransom pay-off. "I'm afraid that we're not prepared to do that. Once you establish that precedent, you will find there's no end to it." Reacting to the Gort statement, Mr Blair said: "This shambles cannot go on any longer, and the sooner we get the chance to put them out of their misery the better."

The Liberal Democrat Chief Whip Archie Kirkwood said: "When the Government can't even command the loyalty of its own backbenchers, how do they expect any longer to command the loyalty of the country?"

French offensive, page 12

'Not so much boxed in, Mr Major has been crated and freighted by Mr Heseltine and Mr Clarke'

— Anthony Bevins, page 18

television's *On the Record* tomorrow lunchtime.

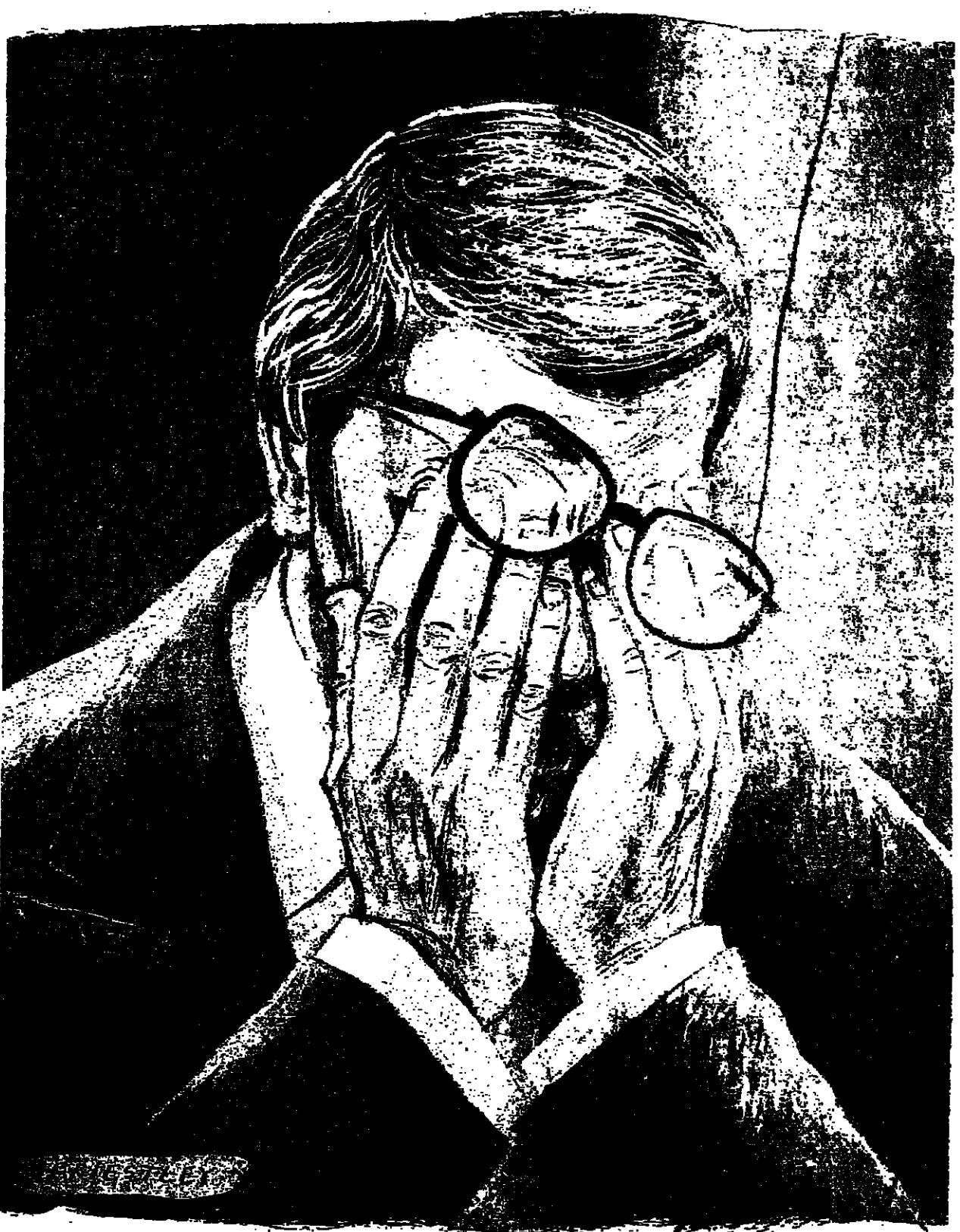
Conservative MPs on both sides of the party's civil war divide will be watching that performance like hawks for signs of movement on the Cabinet's single currency agreement — toughened up by Mr Clarke and Mr Heseltine on Tuesday after No 10 had signalled impending retreat on Monday.

A senior Conservative source said there was no question of Mr Major moving away from the Cabinet agreement, sending the Chancellor to negotiate, "naked into the conference

when Labour wins Thursday's Barnsley East by-election.

At that point, under Commons rules, the Government loses its in-built majority on any new legislative standing committees that give Bills line-by-line consideration. That could yet create problems for the Finance Bill, which enacts the Budget.

In his second BBC radio interview of the day, Mr Heseltine said last night that he had read the text of Sir John's statement, and added: "He doesn't say he's resigning the whip. He says, 'I am today withdrawing my co-operation from the Govern-



Can the Royal Academy paint itself out of debtors' corner?

David Lister
Arts News Editor

The head of the Royal Academy of Arts admitted last night that the 228-year-old institution had a "serious financial problem" after the leak of an auditor's report which revealed a £3m debt and the failure to pay money into the staff pension fund.

But David Gordon, secretary of the Royal Academy, while promising a radical modernisation of the institution, ruled out selling off any of its treasures including Michelangelo's sculpture *Madonna and Child*, estimated to be worth £50m.

The Royal Academy, the heart of Britain's art establishment since Sir Joshua Reynolds established it in the 18th century, has an accumulated deficit of £3m; its auditors Ernst and Young have not yet signed accounts for the last two years; and, most damagingly of all, the auditors have discovered that £200,000 of staff pension contributions and £1m from trust funds intended for capital expenditure have been spent on running the institution.

The auditors also found that the RA spent £237,000 on investigating an alleged fraud during 1995 and 1996 — far more than the £181,000 losses from the fraud. And £200,000 was



The beleaguered RA may have to sell some of its treasures to become solvent again

wasted on exhibitions "which are not going to take place".

Ironically, the RA has long been hailed as an example to the rest of the art world. Lacking any public funding, it has to raise its own money from private sponsorship of exhibitions and entry fees paid by the public, sales of merchandise, and the subscriptions of its 70,000-strong Friends organisation.

But it has been some years

now since it has been able to boast a genuine blockbuster exhibition such as the Monet show of 1990. And private business sponsorship has proved harder to obtain.

The RA accounts reveal that it is costing more than £7m a year to run. In the year to 30 September 1996 it spent £14,718,006, more than half on administration. But it earned only £13,206,918, with almost

£4.5m from exhibitions and a further £2.4m from subscriptions. The shop earned £2.7m and the restaurant more than £1m. Other sources of income were £147,580 from its schools, £313,030 from its magazine and £311,199 from *Evening* viewings raised £236,483.

Among the liabilities listed by the auditors are £191,078 in 1996 "due to pension fund". Earlier this year the secretary

of the RA, Piers Rodgers, was suddenly moved sideways and put in charge of the planned takeover of the Museum of Mankind. The academy did not advertise for a replacement, but instead headhunted David Gordon, former chief executive of Independent Television News.

Speaking to *The Independent* yesterday, Mr Gordon said: "It is a serious financial problem that we are facing and we have been running deficits. But we won't sell works. We are primarily an arts institution here to promote understanding of the arts."

Mr Gordon stressed: "The pension fund is inviolate and there's no question of money being taken out of the pension fund. As a result of inadequate procedures in one of our departments — nothing criminal — payments have not been made."

Mr Gordon and his president, the architect Sir Philip Dowson, are determined to modernise the institution. They want to wrest control from the RA's elected council — chosen from academicians on rotation — and give it to a "review board" appointed by them. In a damning private paper sent to the council, they say the financial situation "indicates a lack not only of necessary financial control but of adequate governance".



Shares plunge

Stock markets around the world fell sharply and London closed with its biggest one-day fall in four years after what appeared to be a deliberate attempt by Alan Greenspan, chairman of the US Federal Reserve, to prick the bubble of soaring US share prices. The FTSE 100 index closed 88.2 points down at 3,963, wiping £20bn off the market value.

Page 20

Raids on Mr Clean

Police armed with a warrant issued by magistrates made 50 raids on Italy's former corruption-buster Antonio Di Pietro and associates.

Page 11

Ulster tensions rise

Tensions rose considerably in Northern Ireland following further sectarian petrol bombings in Ballymena, Co Antrim. Police warned that the discovery of IRA bomb-making equipment was evidence of IRA plans for pre-Christmas attacks in Belfast.

Page 5

Airways compromise

The Government demanded that British Airways and American Airlines give up a large number of their lucrative slots at Heathrow airport as a condition for approving their proposed tie-up.

Page 20

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CONTENTS	
<i>The Broadsheet</i>	Leading Articles . . . 17
<i>Business & City</i> . . . 20-22	Letters . . . 17
<i>Comment</i> . . . 19-21	Obituaries . . . 16
<i>Foreign News</i> . . . 12-15	Saturday Story . . . 18
<i>Gazette</i> . . . 16	Shares . . . 22
<i>Home News</i> . . . 2-11	Sport . . . 23-28
<i>The Long Weekend</i>	John Walsh Interview . . . 3
Arts . . . 4-5	Money . . . 21-24
Books . . . 6-9	Motoring . . . 20
Country . . . 16	Property . . . 25, 26
Games . . . 2	TV & Radio . . . 27, 28
Gardens . . . 16	Weather . . . 27

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significant shorts

Cattle cull to be extended by 100,000

Ministers are poised to announce the slaughter of up to 100,000 extra cattle in the drive to eradicate "mad cow" disease and get the export ban on British beef lifted.

Lord Plumb, leader of the Conservative Euro-MPs, said yesterday he hoped an announcement on a selective cull would be made "within a matter of days". The former president of the National Farmers' Union was part of a delegation of MEPs who on Thursday met Roger Freeman, the minister in charge of the anti-BSE programme.

More than 1 million cattle over thirty months old have already been slaughtered and removed from the food chain. Stephen Goodwin

School scare as boy dies of meningitis

A 16-year-old boy has died of meningitis and a girl from the same school is seriously ill with the disease.

More than 1,262 pupils at Sale Grammar School in Greater Manchester, together with staff, are being given antibiotics while doctors await test results to show if the two cases are linked.

The fifth-former died in Withington Hospital, Manchester, yesterday only 13 hours after becoming ill. The girl, aged 15, became ill on Tuesday. She was described as "stable and responding to treatment".

'Killer of six' freed on bail

Joseph Steele, who was convicted in 1984 of six murders in Glasgow's so-called ice cream wars, was last night celebrating his freedom after being released on bail from a life sentence pending an appeal. His co-accused Thomas Campbell is expected to apply for bail next week.

Fees boost for universities

University vice-chancellors yesterday decided to postpone any decision on charging new levies or fees for full-time home students until next autumn. The news follows a decision by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to devote an extra £100m to higher education.

The vice-chancellors calculate that only £22m of that is "real new money", but conceded that ministers had listened to the universities' campaign for more resources. Barrie Clement

Sooty legs it

Sooty has found his legs. Children's ITV is launching a £1m 13-part cartoon series, next month entitled *Sooty's Amazing Adventures*, and for the first time in his 48-year life the little yellow bear will be seen walking.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

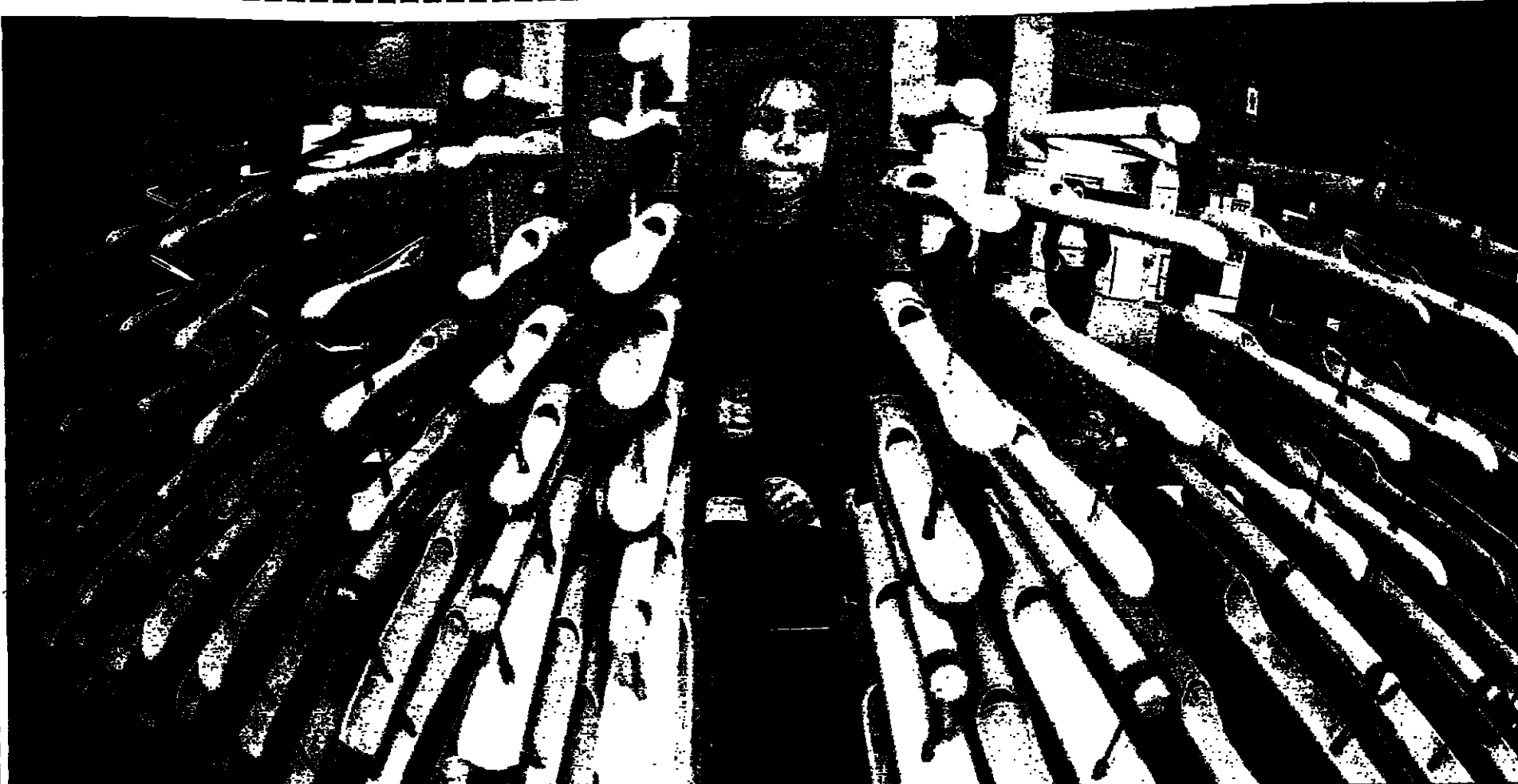
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BACK ISSUES

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Surround sound: Stacey Smith, 8, playing the giant balafon, a 2-metre high bamboo keyboard instrument which forms part of a festival of world music, dance and arts, 'Global Spirit', at the Barbican Centre in London this weekend. This is one of four similar instruments on display designed by Frenchman Robert Hebrard Photograph: Ed Webb

'The kids called me nigger. I wanted to hurt them. I didn't feel sorry'

A man who ran amok with a machete at a nursery school told a jury yesterday that he had believed the children represented the devil and felt no remorse for his victims.

Horrett Campbell, 33, spent two and a half hours in the witness box at Stafford Crown Court explaining that he thought the pupils, aged between three and four, were part of a conspiracy against him.

Campbell, who has been diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic, maintained that children at St Luke's Infant

School in Blakenhall, Wolverhampton, had verbally abused him.

He said: "I walked past the school and the kids would run to the fence and say abusive remarks such as 'nigger'. They would just come out with it."

But psychiatrists said the "auditory hallucinations" and conspiracy theories were all classic symptoms of his mental illness which had not been diagnosed before the school attack on July 8 this year.

Wearing a crumpled beige jacket and white open-necked shirt, Campbell was handed a rolled-up piece of paper and asked to demonstrate the types of blows he had inflicted on his victims, three children and four adults.

Mumbling and stuttering, Campbell swung the paper up to his head and down before moving it across his body in a slashing motion.

He told the court he wanted to attack the children at St Luke's to "get back at them and hurt them". Asked if he intended to kill Campbell replied: "That was not my intention." He said: "I thought the children represented the devil. I had to hit them, they could just be wounded."

Campbell said after the attack he had felt much better and added: "What I did was good. I felt sorry for myself. I didn't really feel sorry for them, no."

Campbell, of Villiers House, a tower block overlooking St Luke's, said he had sat up into the early hours the night before the attack and constructed two home-made flame throwers from metal tubing and foam. His intention was to wet them with petrol from a washing-up liquid bottle full of fuel he carried with him to the attack and throw them "at anything".

Campbell told the court that as he pulled out the machete when he arrived at the school



Horrett Campbell: A doctor told a court yesterday that his delusions of persecution were the classic symptoms of schizophrenia

just after 3.10pm he had seen a little girl who said the words: "If he does it, then he does it."

He said: "I took it to mean she knew why I was there. I thought it was going to look funny if I didn't go ahead and do what I had come to do."

Later, psychiatrist Dr James Collins, from the high-security Ashworth mental hospital on Merseyside, said this was another example of the delusions Campbell was suffering because of his schizophrenia.

Campbell could not recall the exact sequence of the attack but said he had only struck most of his victims one blow as he did not want to kill

them. Referring to the multiple blows suffered by 21-year-old nursery nurse Lisa Potts, as she tried to shield the 18 children in the group, Campbell said he did not realise he had made contact with her body.

Miss Potts had earlier been watching Campbell give evidence from the public gallery but left, accompanied by a police officer, before he referred to her injuries.

Campbell said his reasons for ending the attack were simply that he thought "That's enough".

He associated himself with Dunblane killer Thomas Hamilton and had kept his pic-

ture on his bedroom wall alongside that of Martin Bryant, who shot dead 35 people in Tasmania.

He said of Hamilton's slaughter: "He felt he was doing to others what they had been doing to him. I felt victimised. I thought Hamilton was victimised."

The court heard Campbell had led the life of a lonely outsider since moving to his sixth floor flat 13 years ago.

He said he had one half-sister who lived in America and had only ever had two relationships with women, the last in the 1980s.

Dr Collins, who has been

treating Campbell since November, told the jury: "The diagnosis was of paranoid schizophrenia based on Horrett's past."

He said conspiracy theories and hearing voices were both symptoms of the illness and Campbell had also told him he believed someone was trying to poison him.

But under cross-examination Dr Collins said Campbell's illness did not prevent him from forming an intention - the prosecution say the intention to kill.

In his closing comments Richard Wakerley QC, prosecuting, asked: "Was he so mad that he didn't understand the consequences of what he was doing?"

He said Campbell's motive was the same as that of Thomas Hamilton - "To get even."

But Ian Peddie QC, defending, told the jury: "He was not in his right mind. He did not know, and still does not, that he was genuinely ill and that he was hearing voices - voices he believed were real."

"He acted as he did because he desperately wanted to stop the tide of abuse and for that reason he went to the school - to inflict hurt, not death."

Campbell denies the attempted murder of three-year-old Ahmed Maleck, classmates Rhena Chopra and Francesca Quintyne, both four, Rhena's mother Surinder, 29, parents Anza Rafiq and Wendy Willington, both also 29, and Lisa Potts, 21. The case was adjourned until Monday when the judge is expected to start his summing up.

Douglas death ruled accidental

Wayne Douglas, whose death in police custody a year ago sparked widespread rioting, died accidentally, an inquest jury decided yesterday.

The majority verdict provoked a walkout by many of the 20 or so of the black former postman's relatives and friends at the hearing, as well as apparent expressions of disbelief and disgust.

It also prompted London's Southwark coroner Sir Mon-

tague Levine to make a series of recommendations regarding police training and procedures.

The four-man, five-woman jury, who spent more than five hours considering three weeks of often conflicting evidence, said that in their opinion Mr Douglas, 25, died from "left ventricular [heart] failure".

They said this was caused by stress and exhaustion, as well as

positional "asphyxia" - lying face down with hands cuffed behind him long enough to cause fatal breathing problems.

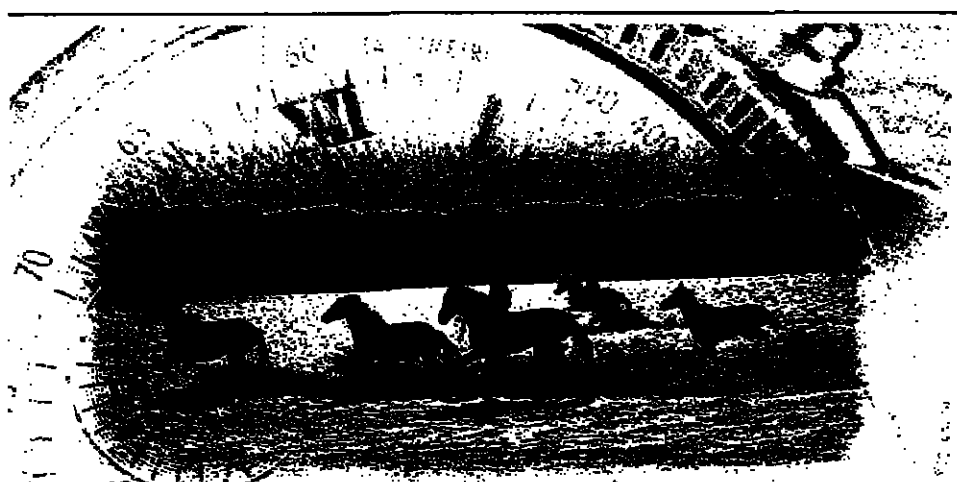
The jury linked their eight-to-one conclusion to a "chase, and series of restraints in the prone position face down as used by current police methods". The coroner spoke of his "deep sympathy" to Mr Douglas's family and praised their "dignified presence" throughout the hearing.

He referred to what he described as an "undercurrent of mistrust and suspicion" that had become apparent between various sections of the community and the police.

"I can only hope that this inquiry has in some way managed to dispel this mistrust and resentment we have seen on some occasions exhibited during this inquest and lead, I hope, to a new rapport between all sections of the community."

Sir Montague said the condition of positional asphyxia was regarded in some quarters as a "myth". "I think it is something that needs going into much more fully than has been in the past."

In seven separate recommendations he then listed. Sir Montague said the efforts of restraining a suspect, especially in the face-down position, needed more research and evaluation.



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Riding roughshod over tradition

A bid by women to join in an old male ritual is causing ructions. Steve Boggan reports

It wasn't the usual cries of "whore" and "slag" that took Mandy Graham by surprise. It was the attack that followed.

"There were three of them and one started licking me," she said. "And it was in broad daylight, at about 1pm." In some ways, the incident echoed the night several months earlier when her best friend, Ashley Simpson, had been poured over her head by a group of men.

Mandy, 21, and Ashley, 22, have grown used to being abused, accustomed to cars slowing down and men – and women – calling them sluts. They have stopped going out at night, but that doesn't stop the daytime dose of disparaging remarks.

They have taken a stance that has alienated them from half the population of the old Scottish town of Hawick, a stance that

'They are used to being called sluts, but are still determined to ride'

has caused deep divisions among men and women, brother and sister, husband and wife. Yet all this fuss is about daring to say that they want to ride alongside men in an ancient Hawick ritual.

The women decided last April that they would like to take part in the Hawick Common-Riding, a series of rituals over six weeks in which horsemen from the town stage 16 set-piece rides to all parts of the town boundaries.

The tradition goes back to 1514 when a rabble of English soldiers was routed by the town's youths in a skirmish at Horseshole, a hangover from the earlier English victory at Flodden. The youths took the English flag and rode triumphantly home. Ever since, it has been the custom to check the town boundaries annually, with a chosen flag-bearer, the Cornet,



Beyond acceptable bounds: Mandy Graham above Hawick, the town with a riding ritual from which women are barred

Photograph: David Rose

heading a main procession on a Friday in early June.

The women's attempts to join in were greeted with anger, jeering and open hostility.

"It was quite upsetting and it can still be a bit scary, but we

don't regret what we are trying to do," Mandy said. "There is absolutely no reason why women should not join in – we have only asked to take part in some of the smaller events, not the big one, but I think they feel

threatened by us."

It would be easy to assume the matter was a straightforward case of sexism but many townsfolk of both sexes say it is not. There are men on the women's side and there are women on

the side of the all-male Common-Riding Committee.

"It's tradition and I don't think we should mess about with tradition," said one grandmother, who asked not to be named for fear of reprisals. "It

has always been an event for the men, and there are women's roles too. There is the Cornet's Lass, who ties blue and yellow ribbon to the flag, and she chooses maids of honour. We women should be happy with

those roles."

Such talk would make some Hawick men sick. One of those is Norman Pender, a former Scottish rugby international and chairman of the Lady Riders Association.

"I don't buy the traditionalist argument because we know that women were allowed to ride until 1932, when the all-male committee voted to exclude them," he said. "This is about sexism. These women have been treated disgracefully."

"They are fine horsewomen and grew up watching the Common-Riding every year and they grew to love it. Why shouldn't they take part in it?"

On Wednesday, the town's 16,000 population was invited to take part in an unprecedented referendum on whether women should be allowed to take part in all events, something that not even the women themselves have asked for.

The Lady Riders Association called on the townsfolk to boycott the ballot, and so claimed victory when only 2,794 turned

'Those who voted were 2,207 to 587 against the women'

out to vote. But the Common-Riding Committee, too, claimed victory because those who did take part voted 2,207 to 587 against the women.

"It beats me how they managed to claim victory out of that," said one member of the Common-Riding Committee. He and other members refuse to speak openly pending a Sheriff's Court hearing in the New Year on the legality of their ban.

"We aren't being sexist. A new organisation has sprung up out of this – the Supporters of Hawick, its Customs and Traditions Committee. That has 1,600 members and half of those are women."

"It is something more complicated than sexism. It is in your blood. It is about that day when the young lads of the town scored that victory over the English. And, quite simply, there were no women there."

Koalas make a monkey out of the police

Ian Burrell

Gathering dust in police files is a dossier containing the fingerprints of the most unlikely criminal gang – half-a-dozen chimpanzees and a pair of orang-utans.

Their dabs were taken during police raids at the Ape House at London Zoo and at Twycross Zoo in Leicestershire. The operation, by fingerprint experts from Hertfordshire police, took place in 1975 at a time when there was growing concern over unsolved crimes. It concluded that chimpanzees looked exactly the same as ours, but did not link them to any specific offence.

The chimp file is likely to be re-examined in the light of new evidence yesterday that criminal investigations in Australia may have been hampered by the presence of koala fingerprints at the scenes of crimes.

Maclej Hennenberg, a biological anthropologist and forensic scientist at the University of Adelaide, said that the marsupials had fingerprints which were so close to those of people that they could easily be mistaken for police.

While handling koalas in Urimbirra wildlife park, near Adelaide, Mr Hennenberg

noticed their fingers carried ridged patterns of loops, whorls and arches like those on a human hand.

"It appears that no one has bothered to study them in detail," he said. "Although it is extremely unlikely that koala prints would be found at the scene of a crime, police should at least be aware of the possibility."

The animal connection did not surprise Frank Wheeler, head keeper of small mammals at London Zoo, who clearly remembers the arrival of the police squad 21 years ago.

The chimps, all juveniles aged around six or seven, did not struggle as their digits were dusted and pressed on to sticky fingerprint tape. "They sat there quite happily," he said.

As brachiaters (animals which move sideways by swinging hand over hand), the orang-utans have tiny thumbs, which put them out of the frame.

Mr Wheeler disputed the Australian evidence that koala prints looked human. "Their hands have been adapted for climbing," he said. "Three digits face forwards and two face sideways."

The police operation in 1975 was led by Steve Haylock, now with the City of London police fingerprint bureau. He said the



Paws for thought: could koalas' fingerprints confuse the police at a crime scene?

exercise was carried out because police officers habitually referred to spoiled fingerprints as "monkey prints".

The zoo expedition proved this was nonsense. Mr Haylock said: "If you passed a chimpanzee print to a fingerprint office and said it came from the scene of a crime they would not know it was not human."

Among those finger-printed was a face familiar to millions

of television viewers; not as a wanted villain but as a star of PG Tips tea commercials. The police team briefly considered taking prints from gorillas but thought better of it.

There are no koalas in Britain. The last one was taken out of London Zoo several years ago and deported to Portugal. It had become lonely and was not under suspicion of a criminal offence.

Drinks case executive loses

A television executive yesterday lost his High Court damages claim against a company doctor who said he should not get the job he had been offered because of his drinking habits.

The judge ruled that Peter Baker had failed to establish that Dr George Kaye was negligent or in breach of his duty to carry out a proper assessment of his health. Deputy judge Robert Owen QC said he was satisfied that a substantial body of reasonable medical opinion would have arrived at the same conclusion as Dr Kaye that Mr Baker was "likely to consume excessive amounts of alcohol in a work-related context".

Mr Baker, 53, of Great Bookham, Surrey, was headhunted by the American television corporation NBC in 1991 for the £45,000-a-year post as European head of international sales. He felt he had virtual-



Peter Baker: Ordered to pay costs estimated at £50,000

ly got the job and sent a resignation letter to his existing employers, but was turned down by NBC on Dr Kaye's recommendation.

Dr Kaye, of Kensington, west London, had told the judge he did not label Mr Baker an alcoholic, but assessed him as a

"spree drinker". He concluded from his interview with Mr Baker and subsequent blood liver tests that he was likely to consume excessive amounts of alcohol in the discharge of his professional duties "to the extent that the sharpness of his thought processes would be affected".

The doctor said he regarded Mr Baker's self-reported intake of less than four bottles of table wine per week – 35 units of alcohol – as a "substantial underestimate".

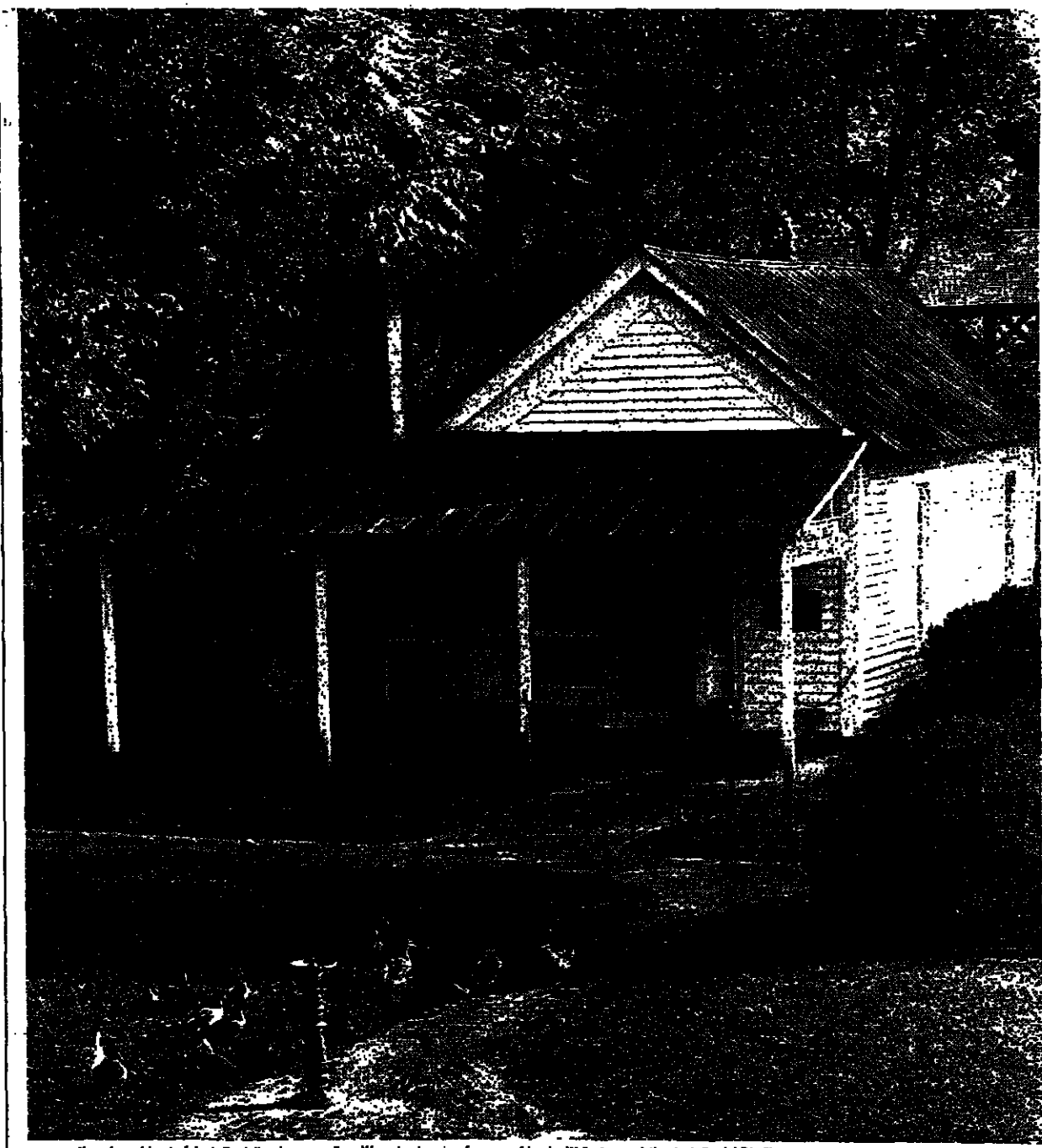
Mr Baker called expert evidence that the blood-test results could have been the result of other factors, such as being overweight. And the judge heard evidence that 35 units or more was within the level that many business people consumed in a week.

But the judge said Mr Baker knew the job offer was conditional on the medical

assessment and he "jumped the gun" in resigning prematurely from Guild Television.

The court had heard evidence from the former medical director of NBC's parent company, General Electric of New York, that the corporation's "culture" did not prohibit the use of alcohol, but over the years it had become less tolerant of it.

The judge said Dr Kaye had a duty to judge Mr Baker with reasonable care according to the company's requirements, but he also owed a similar duty to Mr Baker. Dr Kaye's interpretation of the test results showed he took a cautious approach – a decision not to recommend someone for employment was never made lightly and was very rare – and the judge said he was not satisfied the doctor was in breach of his duty. Mr Baker was ordered to pay the estimated £50,000 costs of the case.



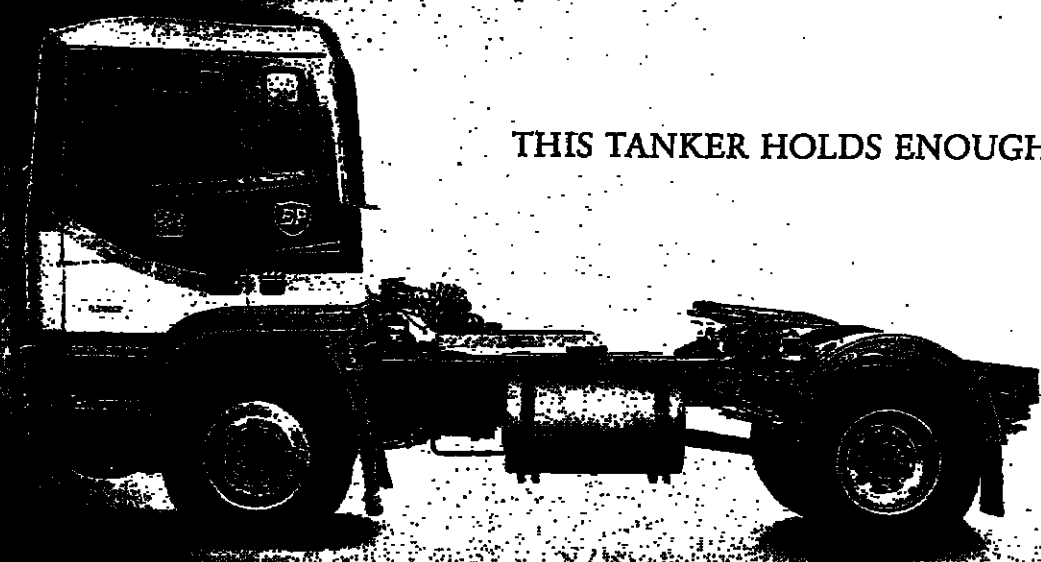
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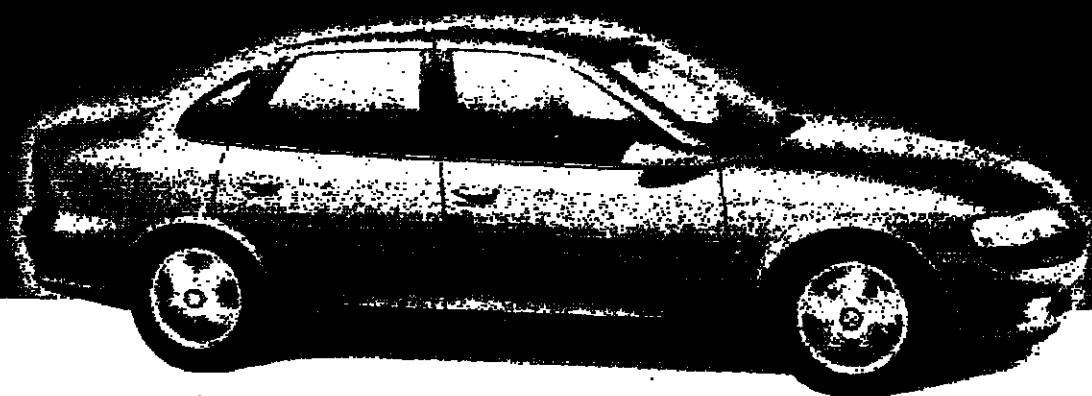
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A night of arson and reprisals: they even targeted the kitchen sink

David McKittrick
Ireland Correspondent

Tensions rose considerably in Northern Ireland yesterday as further sectarian petrol bombings took place in Ballymena, Co Antrim, and police warned that a discovery of IRA material constituted clear evidence of IRA plans for pre-Christmas attacks in Belfast.

In Ballymena, two more Catholic schools were damaged in arson attacks, while a gang burst into a Catholic home and attacked a family.

The Ballymena incidents are the latest in a series which have plagued the mainly Protestant town in recent months. There are concerns that police and Loyalist demonstrators may come into violent conflict tonight when Loyalists stage their by-now-routine picketing of the Catholic church in the town during Mass.

Yesterday brought appeals for calm as, with the communal tensions and fears of renewed terrorist activity rose exponentially. Sean Farren of the Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party, warned: "It is essential for the country to draw back from this confrontation and for leadership to ensure that it will not happen again. The situation is not as serious as it might be, but it would be very serious not just for the communities in North Antrim, but elsewhere as well."

The first fire broke out at St Patrick's College. The alarm was raised when smoke was spotted by a member of the public and damage was limited. In the second attack, at St Joseph's primary school, outside the town, a passing police patrol noted the fire and tried to contain it until the fire brigade arrived.

In the other incident, the group of men broke into a house in the Ballyisland area of the town and



Barry Downey in his mother's house in Ballymena (left) and the damage caused by concrete blocks thrown through the kitchen window yesterday Photographs: Tom Pilston

Meanwhile, police regard as highly significant the discovery of three mortars of the type used by the IRA for attacks on security bases, together with incendiary devices.

The find was made on Thursday in a house in West Belfast, and a woman is being questioned about the discovery. The mortars are of a type which have been used primar-

ily for attacks on security force bases. They have also been used as "horizontal mortars," when they have been dug into the side of the road and fired point-blank at security

Couple try to abduct son of murdered headmaster

Detectives are hunting a couple who tried to abduct the nine-year-old son of the murdered headmaster Philip Lawrence.

Officers are also investigating the possibility that the couple had specially targeted Lucien Lawrence.

His mother, Mrs. Frances Lawrence, 47, has told detectives that the couple, who claimed to be social workers, asked for Lucien by name.

Detective Inspector Alan Gale said yesterday outside the Lawrence family's home in Ealing, west London: "Police are currently investigating an allegation of attempted abduction of Mrs Lawrence's son from this address on Wednesday afternoon."

"Shortly after 3.30 a man and a woman came to the front door of the house, said they were from social services, and asked

and I would ask that the media respect her privacy at this traumatic time."

In September, mother-of-four Mrs Lawrence disclosed that she was being terrorised by a hooded stalker.

But police said there was no evidence to link the stalking to the abduction attempt.

Mrs Lawrence spent yesterday helping police draw up E-fit pictures of the two suspects.

She told police the man was aged about 40, 5ft 11in tall, with short brown hair and black rimmed glasses, and was wearing a beige mackintosh.

The woman was aged about 28, black, 5ft 6in, with short black, bobbed hair, and was wearing a black jacket and black shirt.

Mr Gale said: "Any allegation made of this nature we will treat very seriously."

Detectives took Lucien to

Officers are also investigating whether the incident could be linked to any similar attacks in the west London area.

As the investigation continued yesterday the Home Office announced it was launching an award scheme in memory of the murdered headmaster.

Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, said he hoped the Philip Lawrence Memorial Awards would "help raise the sights of young people".

Mr Lawrence's wife, Frances welcomed the news saying she and their children had been profoundly moved by the award plans.

ther details of the awards which he proposed in October. at Mrs Lawrence launched his own call for good citizenship to be promoted.

death outside St George's School, Maida Vale, west London, after he tried to protect a pupil from a 15-year-old boy from another school.

Today's announcement came two days before Mr Lawrence's nine-year-old son Lucien unveiled a plaque in front of the school gates to mark the first anniversary of his father's death.

The Home Office said the awards scheme would be launched in March next year when nominations would

invited so that the first awards could be made around the second anniversary of the murder.

"The awards will focus



Frances Lawrence refused a 'check-up' for son Lucien (top)

to take Mrs Lawrence's son to the local health centre, apparently for a check-up.

"She was suspicious and refused them access to her son. She made inquiries to her local doctor and contacted the police. They used her son's name. I can't say whether this is a specific attempt against Mr. Lawrence or an ad hoc attempt."

Mrs Lawrence stayed inside the smart detached house all morning, giving a statement and details of the attackers to CID officers. Mr Gale said: "Mr Lawrence is obviously very upset with this incident."

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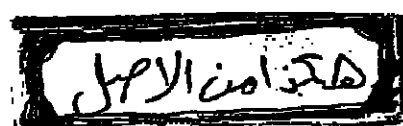
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Setting the style: Leopard man 'Aydo', left, promotes the use of animal skin effects at the NEC Clothes Show (photograph: Ian Hodgson) A model sporting a 'Big Wow' lycra top (photograph: Andrew Buurman)

Fashion victims or dedicated followers?

Fashion victims could be seen pouring into Birmingham's NEC yesterday hoping to find a way out of their sartorial predicament.

For dedicated followers, the BBC's Clothes Show Live has thrown open its doors at the exhibition centre to a show featuring live catwalk parades, top international models and showbusiness names from all over the world.

The event lasts a week, and as well as a chance to see the latest creations and the people wearing them, there will be plenty of opportunities to spend money. For the well-off there are stands by designers Betty Jackson, Patrick Cox, and Ben de Laet. For the thinner of wallet there are clothes from C&A and other chain stores.

■ Clothes Show Live tickets hotline: 0121 767 4444

Legal service found guilty of race bias

Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

The Government Legal Service has been found guilty of breaking the law on race and sex discrimination, and is being forced to make radical changes to recruitment procedures.

The failures of the service – which fills 1,100 solicitors' and barristers' posts throughout most government departments and agencies – emerged after a black woman was rejected for a job at the Treasury.

The London South Industrial Tribunal found that Chineme Nwoke was the victim of a seriously flawed selection system.

The tribunal decided that a marking procedure was "so subjective as to allow personal prejudices, whether conscious or unconscious, to seep into assessments".

Ms. Nwoke, whose case was backed by the Commission for Racial Equality, was given such a low grading that under the Service's rules she was effectively prevented from applying for such a post again.

The tribunal awarded her £2,000 for injury to feelings and a highly unusual exemplary payment of £1,000 "aggravated damages". The Service was also urged to re-interview her if she applied for a future vacancy.

The tribunal judgement said that "alarm bells were set ringing" when the chairman of the appointments board admitted that an element in selection was whether the candidate would "fit in". In its judgement, the tribunal pointed out that during the recruitment process every white candidate with local government experience was marked grade C

or above, while no applicant from the ethnic minorities with a similar background achieved such a rating.

Eight white candidates with a 2.2 degree or lower were given a grade of at least C, but not one from the ethnic minorities with such qualifications.

Some 2.4 per cent of black or Asian candidates were marked C or above, compared with 7.6 per cent of white men and 11.2 per cent of white women. Half of the black or Asian candidates who were shortlisted, were finally appointed, compared with 76.2 per cent of white men and 63 per cent of white women. Despite receiving higher marks, women were less likely to be recommended for a post and if appointed, they were paid less.

The tribunal was "satisfied that



Herman Ouseley: 'Award showed tribunal's concern'

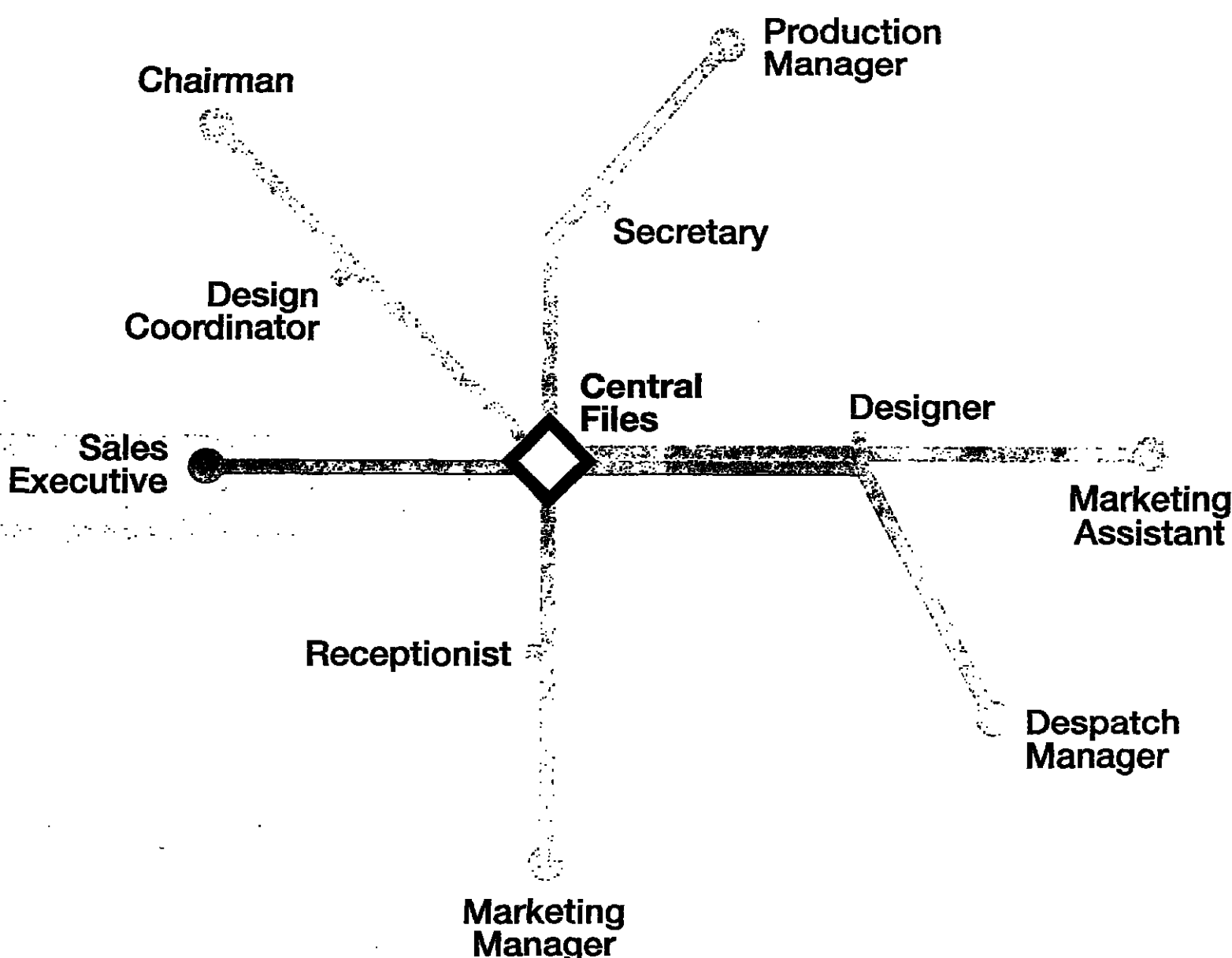
the applicant did not do enough to be recommended for appointment, but not satisfied that her appointment was so bad as to warrant exclusion from any future shortlisting."

Ms. Nwoke said she was pleased her case had brought about changes in the selection process. "I sensed that something was wrong from the beginning of the interview. Now nearly three years later, I am gratified that my decision to take up this case may be of help to others."

Herman Ouseley, chairman of the CRE, said the award of aggravated damages was a sign of the tribunal's concern. "Government lawyers must surely be expected to achieve a standard in the provision of equality of opportunity second to none," he said.

Douglas Walters, of the Government Legal Service, said officials had taken the decision very seriously and the tribunal's comments would be informing a review of the system.

Attempts had already been made to ensure that selection criteria were now "specific, unbiased and measurable". ■ A black prison officer who was subjected to a campaign of harassment and discrimination lasting 18 months has been awarded record damages of £28,500, it was confirmed yesterday. Claude Johnson had been the target of an "appalling" campaign including victimisation, racial jibes and ostracism.



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news

Police reject claims in Hillsborough film



Under pressure: The actor John Graham Davies playing the role of Supt Roger Marshall, in Granada's drama-documentary on the Hillsborough disaster

Louise Jury

Police are to watch again a controversial television drama on the Hillsborough football disaster although they believe it raised no new evidence, South Yorkshire Chief Constable Richard Wells said yesterday.

As families of the Hillsborough victims called on the Home Secretary to open a new inquiry into the disaster, Mr Wells said all issues raised in the programme were known to investigators at the time.

Ninety-six Liverpool soccer fans died after a gate was opened to ease crowding outside the Sheffield Wednesday stadium, allowing hundreds to pour on to the terraces where

they were crushed. Families believe there should be a new inquiry because the Granada television research cast doubts on police evidence. It suggested officers must have known the severity of the over-crowding in the pens when the decision to open the gates was taken.

Roger Houldsworth, a camera technician, gave a sworn affidavit to the programme-makers that a closed-circuit camera focused on the terraces was not out of order as had been claimed by some witnesses.

Mr Wells said that statements from Mr Houldsworth at the time "were not in accordance with things he is saying today". He went on: "Claims about missing tapes and changed

statements were all issues that were known about and dealt with in an above-board fashion in the earlier hearings. There is nothing here to suggest the need for new official scrutiny."

But as pressure from the families mounted, the Chief Constable told them that senior officers would look again at the film "in the cold light of day". He said: "I can give a very solemn undertaking that if there is new material we will pursue it."

Papers on the case have been

presented by the Hillsborough Family Support Group to a criminal barrister for an opinion on whether there are grounds for prosecutions and a new inquest. A verdict of accidental death was returned, but families claim the hearing was inadequate.

Trevor Hicks, the support group chairman, said they wanted the Home Secretary to re-open the case. He said the coroner, Dr Stefan Popper, had told them an inquest was not the proper forum for an investiga-

tion and the families did not trust the South Yorkshire police to carry out thorough inquiries.

"Richard Wells says this evidence is not new but it is new in the public domain. It completely contradicts evidence given by South Yorkshire officers who claimed that the camera if it was not faulty was deficient," Mr Hicks said.

"One of the critical items in the whole scenario is what the police were aware of at the time when they opened the gates."



Trevor Hicks, chairman of the Hillsborough Support Group, and his two daughters, Sarah and Vicki, who died in the crush on the terrace. Photoimage: Jonathan Arnes

Fans shot after row with rivals

Charlie Bain

Two Manchester United soccer fans were in hospital in Vienna last night after being wounded in a drive-by shooting following a row with rival fans in a bar in the city's red-light district.

Steven Daye, 33, was in a critical condition following emergency surgery to remove a bullet from his abdomen when he was ambushed late on Thursday night with fellow fan Christopher McKenna, 32, who was shot in the leg.

The pair, both from Manchester, were involved with two other Manchester United fans in a verbal altercation with rival football supporters before the gunmen opened fire from a white Mercedes, the Foreign Office said last night.

All four fans were in the Austrian capital to witness their team's 2-0 victory over Rapid

Vienna in the European Champions' league match on Wednesday night.

Mr McKenna denied claims that the group were arguing with rival fans from his hospital bed last night and saying that he had "no idea" why they were attacked. "The four of us were just chatting and laughing when suddenly car windows and shop windows around us shattered," he said. "The next thing I knew Steven and I were lying on the floor with blood everywhere."

"We were really impressed with how friendly the Austrians were, even though they lost the match. We'd had a brilliant holiday and had been out celebrating, but didn't go overboard and decided to go back to the hotel because our flight left at 4am."

Manchester United Football Club last night issued a statement saying it was "shocked" by the news.

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Health lab cuts continue as poison toll rises

lan Burrell

As an elderly man yesterday became the eighth victim of the *E. coli* food poisoning epidemic in Scotland, doctors warned of a crisis in the public laboratories set up to monitor such outbreaks.

Laboratories have been closed down in Bath, Wolverhampton, and Guildford, and several others, including the highly respected lab at St George's Hospital, south London, face imminent closure.

Dr Harvey Gordon, a consultant in communicable disease control, said the Public Health Laboratory Service, part of the Department of Health, was being "decimated" by cuts and re-organisation.

He said: "The less laboratories in the country, the less surveillance of communicable diseases and the greater likelihood that something will get out of hand before appropriate investigations have taken place."

The PHLS is carrying out a nationwide investigation into the prevalence of the highly virulent *E. coli* 0157 bacterium, which is being found in an in-

creasing number of food products including meats, milk and apple juice. The outbreak in Lanarkshire has left 290 people reporting symptoms. Nine new suspected cases emerged yesterday, though the number of confirmed cases remains at 128.

The latest victim, who came from Bonnybridge, but who is not being named, died in Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary. A spokeswoman for Forth Valley Health Board said: "Sadly, this death came very unexpectedly. The patient had been recovering from his *E. coli* infection and was making good progress. He was due to leave hospital this morning."

The health board spokeswoman said 13 victims were still in hospital, 11 of them in Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary. The condition of three of the patients is described as "poor".

A further 30 people are being treated at Monklands Hospital, Airdrie, where 16 patients are giving "cause for concern".

The spread of *E. coli* 0157 has so alarmed government scientists that new guidelines are being drawn up to put the bacterium on the same danger

level as typhoid. Scientists working in public health laboratories had previously treated it the same as other food poisons.

In the last few months, however, three laboratory workers have been struck down after testing swabs for bugs.

The Health and Safety Executive is now preparing new guidelines for workers to treat *E. coli* as highly contagious. They will be required to take greater care in handling the bacterium, including wearing masks and working in an enclosed environment. An HSE spokesman said: "*E. coli* seems to be caught very easily and has very severe side-effects and a high mortality rate."

The PHLS said recent changes in its structure had placed laboratories within regional groupings which enabled all of them to have access to specialist techniques which they otherwise would not have had. A spokeswoman said: "Like many public-sector organisations we have seen successive reductions in our funding and have been required to make efficiency savings. But the strategic review has led to distinct benefits."

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Wagner's lost opera script goes for a song

Charlie Bain

A recently-discovered manuscript of the first poetical draft of Richard Wagner's romantic opera *Tannhäuser* was bought by a German dealer for £84,000 at an auction at Sotheby's in London yesterday.

The 150-year-old autographed manuscript has never before been available to experts, and came to light after an eastern European vendor notified the auction house's book department.

It was last on record as being given by the 19th century composer to the Swiss conductor Wilhelm Baumgartner as a new year's present in 1852. The only previous reference to it is in a letter written by Wagner in 1843.

The final prose draft of *Tannhäuser* was finished early in 1842 and is the second of Richard Wagner's operas in the modern repertoire. A working of the 13th century myth based on the knightly minstrel by the



Wagner's manuscript: in good condition and much as the composer laid down the pen

same name, it charts the protagonist's search for redemption after living with the Goddess of Love, Venus.

Although much of the text is the same as the first printed libretto, there are many differences such as the inversion of words and the addition or removal of prepositions and particles which Wagner may have altered during the composition of the music. The finale of the opera and many of the stage directions are also noticeably different from the modern version performed today.

The manuscript was bought by Hans Schneider, a leading German music dealer based in Tutzing and was expected to have fetched nearer £100,000.

Stephen Roe, head of Sotheby's book department and a specialist in musical manuscripts, said it was a major find for scholars of the composer. "It is going to be of immense interest to experts on Wagner and is in very good condition - very much as Wagner had laid down the pen," he said.



In performance: A scene from Wagner's romantic opera *Tannhäuser*. The finale and many of the stage directions used on the modern stage are different from the original manuscript. Photograph: Laurie Lewis

MP in new bid to tackle knives menace

Patricia Wynn Davies
Legal Affairs Editor

Negotiations between Labour and the Government over the best way to tackle the menace of combat knives will reach a critical stage on Monday prior to the launch of an opposition Private Member's Bill.

Jimmy Wray, Labour MP for Glasgow Provan, who came top of the ballot for backbench Bills, has pledged to use his measure, scheduled to have its Commons Second Reading next Friday, to ban the weapons.

His draft Bill, submitted to the Home Office as part of all-party attempt to reach a consensus, proposes a blanket ban on the sale of all knives with blades longer than three inches, subject to exceptions covering trade, domestic, or artistic use and ceremonial knives used for religious purposes or as part of national costume.

Labour wants to secure government backing for the measure and persuade it to drop its own alternative draft which would only outlaw the aggressive marketing of the weapons. Mr Wray will meet Home Office officials on Monday to press the case ahead of the introduction of his Bill on Wednesday.

Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, is also expected to meet police superintendents in the wake of publication of their suggested formula, agreed at the Police Superintendents' Association national executive committee meeting this week.

The association wants the Home Secretary to create a new offence to outlaw the sale or advertising of "any knife or bladed instrument of any description which is apparently designed or made to injure or wound another".

However, the Home Office emphasised yesterday that this still involved a subjective, rather than objective, definition which would make it difficult to get the law to stick in court.

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news

Once seen as enemies of the city's homosexuals, Manchester's police are now building bridges

Besieged gays win some new friends in the North

James Cusick

Rumours of a particularly vicious incident recently swirled through the gay and lesbian community of Manchester: a gay man had been violently attacked and beaten up, his ear was bitten off and he was thrown in a canal.

But unlike most violent crimes, the details could not be confirmed because the incident was not reported to the police, and the attacker escaped from justice.

Manchester's gay "village", the rejuvenated streets near the city's Piccadilly district, is one of the country's most openly homosexual areas. Unlike Old Compton Street in Soho in London, the village is a definable community of pubs, restaurants, clubs, shops and flats.

Now in one of the UK's first formal attempts to eliminate "hate crimes", Greater Manchester Police and the city's Lesbian and Gay Policing Initiative will next week launch a new way of dealing with homophobic attacks. Manchester police are open about their lack of knowledge on hate crime. If incidents like the

canal attack do not get reported there are no official police statistics to warrant their attention. And in the village, where not all gay men, lesbians or transsexuals are "out", and where fear of employers, families or friends finding out is part of some people's lives, violence and associated crime is accepted as a risk rather than an infringement of civil rights.

From Tuesday, however, the usual route of reporting a crime to the police, having to give your identity and subsequently awaiting police action will change. In its place, will be a list of options that will include an "incident self-reporting form" where giving a name and address is optional. Inspector Kevin McLoughlin, the force's lesbian and gay liaison officer, claims the new "equality policy" will "enable reports to be made anonymously and we will begin to generate some statistics and target resources at homophobic crime."

The inspector admits that the police have a poor image in the village. "We don't get a good press, we're seen as macho and unsympathetic but the new initiative will make us



Pink power: Outside the Metz Café Bar in Manchester's gay village, one of the country's most openly homosexual areas

Photograph: Howard Barlow

more accountable." The incident forms remind that "many offenders consider our communities an easy target because we suffer in silence... hate crimes hurt more when they aren't reported."

The relationship between gay people and Manchester police has gradually improved since the days of the former Chief Constable, James Arderton. His comments about gays and Aids, saying that homosexuals "were swimming in

a cesspit of their own making" did little for the force's public relations. Five years ago the newly appointed Chief Constable, David Wilmot, gave an almost immediate commitment to community policing.

However, the goodwill he initially generated soured in April 1994 when police raided the Mineshaft fetish club and arrested 13 men. Ian Wilmott, a local government manager and chairman of the Lesbian and Gay Police Initiative said:

"At that point the wedding was off. The raid took us back to the old days of hostility."

Next week's launch is the result of recent years of negotiation that culminated in a conference in November last year called "Police and Diversity: An Agenda for Change". Around 350 delegates, including many from Britain's police forces, attended aiming to deliver a national policing charter.

Ian Wilmott said: "We want

police officers to be gay friendly - but that is not as important as preventing serious assault."

Today's village is a defined community catered for by a gay doctors' practice, gay lawyers and a growing array of smart apartments and restaurants; where there were once dark basements for a hidden culture, there are now mainstream breweries investing in expensive glass-fronted warehouse pubs.

Gay hotels are also being planned for the village and Manchester is likely to win a place on the international gay destinations route alongside San Francisco and Sydney.

With Manchester City Council wanting the regeneration of its city centre to continue, the village and its clubs such as Cruise 101, Paradise and The Danceteria may be seen as an island of specialist property now demanding mainland protection.

Anger at rush on stalking Bill

Patricia Wynn Davies

Government plans to rush the proposed stalking law through all its Commons stages in one day provoked an angry response yesterday from civil liberties campaigners and the Liberal Democrats.

The move, set for Monday week, would mean that some of the toughest criminal laws ever to reach the statute book would be expected to clear its Second Reading, Committee Stage, and Report and Third Reading in a matter of hours.

As drafted, the Protection from Harassment Bill could trigger prosecutions carrying heavy penalties for two instances of stalking or racial or neighbour harassment, without the need to prove intention to cause injury. Breach of a civil injunction could also amount to a criminal offence leading to severe punishment.

John Wadham, director of Liberty, the civil rights organisation, said: "Every single piece of legislation which has been rushed through in this manner has been fraught with problems and has in practice taken up an enormous amount of government time after the event."

Annie Kirkwood, the Liberal Democrat chief whip, protested to government managers yesterday that the time scale would prevent proper scrutiny of the measure. The Liberal Democrats have demanded at least an extra half-day to enable MPs to table committees and report stage amendments.

The Government is banking on Labour support for the following last month's pledge by Tony Blair, the party leader, to help get it passed.

Christmas appeal: abused children need your help

Glenda Cooper

At the end of a year in which *The Independent* has campaigned for victims of child abuse to be given a voice, we would like you to support our Victims of Abuse appeal to help children whose lives have been devastated.

Our Christmas appeal is in support of projects run by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, including its helpline, and direct support to help children who have been abused and to help prevent future abuse.

The years of abuse suffered by more than 100 children in Croydon was first reported by *The Independent* and was the launchpad for a campaign which eventually won government action to tighten standards in children's homes.

But countless stories of children in the community or in residential care have never been heard. The NSPCC, Britain's leading child protection charity, runs over 120 projects throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland offering counselling and therapy to abused children as well as carrying out its own investigations into allegations of child abuse. The charity relies on public donations for 85 per cent of its income.

We would like you to contribute between now and Christmas. Your money will go to help projects such as the NSPCC's freephone helpline, which take 1,200 calls a week; the London Investigation Team, which works

with police to investigate paedophiles; and the Kaleidoscope Project in Newcastle, which treats children who have abused other children.

Anyone concerned about a child's welfare can contact the NSPCC child protection helpline anytime free on 0800 800 500.

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Italy's clean hands do the dirty on each other

Andrew Gumbel
Rome

Di Pietro target for police raids as anti-corruption team breaks ranks



Antonio Di Pietro: Now under investigation himself

What ever happened to the team of anti-corruption magistrates who brought the rotten Italian political system to its knees four years ago? The old politicians may have been dumped or recycled, but the endemic corruption shows no signs of being brought under control. As for the magistrates, clearly feeling frustrated at their inability to finish the job they started so brilliantly, they have spent the past few weeks at each others' throats.

The atmosphere has turned to pure poison, with magistrates investigating other magistrates, trying to take over each other's investigations and denouncing each other to higher authorities for alleged professional irregularities.

Nobody has been caught up in this more than Antonio Di Pietro, the most famous of the corruption-busters who quit the judiciary two years ago to seek a new career in politics.

Yesterday morning he woke up to the unpleasant surprise of a massive police raid on every address where he has either lived or worked in the past few years — the sort of treatment usually reserved for high-profile terrorists or Mafia killers.

Finance police armed with a warrant issued by magistrates in the northern town of Brescia conducted a total of 50 dawn raids, rousing Mr Di Pietro's family out of bed near Milan. Quite what they found was not clear, although judicial sources said the raids were ordered because Mr Di Pietro — regularly cited as Italy's most popular public figure — was suspected of allowing himself to be corrupted by key witnesses during his time as a magistrate in Milan.

It is almost impossible to judge whether the allegations have any foundation, since the tawdry atmosphere has made the evidence of key witnesses

subject to every kind of low political manipulation. Mr Di Pietro himself concluded last month that the only appropriate response to the non-stop sneers was to resign his post as public works minister.

What one can conclude is that the squabbling within the magistrature is a measure of its growing toothlessness. Instead of nailing cabinet ministers and captains of state industry, as they were four years ago, they are now out to get each other.

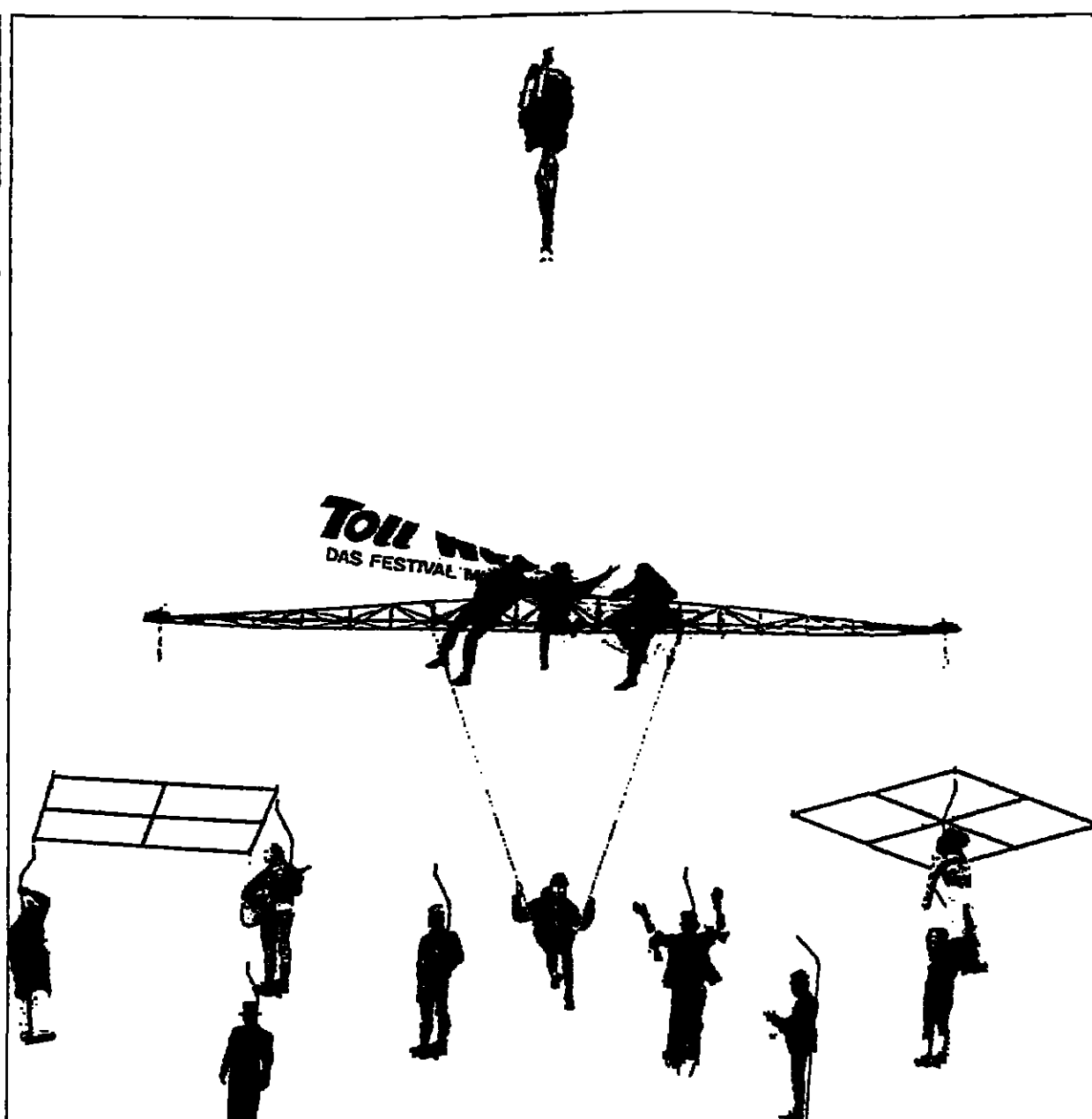
Even Mr Pietro's former colleagues in the "Clean Hands" team of anti-corruption magistrates in Milan have broken ranks. Testifying in the latest interminable trial concerning Mr Di Pietro in Brescia last week, they barely concealed their contempt for him and his decision to leave them in the lurch by resigning in December 1994. Chief prosecutor Francesco Saverio Borrelli even suggested that a bout of psychotherapy might have helped him overcome the troubles that prompted him to quit.

It would be wrong to think the judiciary's woes are limited to Mr Di Pietro, however. One of the two magistrates investigating the case, Alberto

Cardino of La Spezia, was recently subjected to a disciplinary procedure on the rather vague grounds that he had spoken too freely to the media. Most of the investigation has now been transferred to the Perugia prosecutors' office — supposedly for reasons of bureaucratic convenience but very possibly as a means of downgrading its importance in the eyes of the public.

According to the chief prosecutor in La Spezia, Antonio Conte, Mr Cardino's real misdemeanour may have been to touch too many raw nerves in the establishment. "My fear is that other magistrates will draw the conclusion that it is better not to go near the interests of the powerful," Mr Conte said. Certainly, the anti-corruption drive, known as *tangentopoli*, has come to a dead end, nearly all of the thousands of suspects initially arrested and questioned are now free, and all political talk is of bringing the process to a definitive conclusion, not by drawing up new anti-corruption legislation but by calling some kind of judicial amnesty.

Another Milan prosecutor, Gerardo D'Ambrosio, warned last week that *tangentopoli* could turn into a total whitewash. "If the trials that have been called are not hurried up, there is the risk they will be wiped out by the statute of limitations," he said.



High flyers: Performers from Britain's Circus of Horrors forming a mobile in the sky over the Bavaria statue in Munich yesterday to promote their visit to the German city. Photograph: Jan Nienheisen/Reuters

Serb minister quits over TV censorship

Tony Barber
Belgrade

Trouble broke out on another front for President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia yesterday as ethnic Albanian leaders in the southern province of Kosovo expressed support for the enormous pro-democracy rallies that have rocked Belgrade for the last 19 days. "We are watching with sympathy the attempts in Serbia to achieve real democratic reform," Hydrjet Hyzeni, a spokesman for the ethnic Albanians, said.

Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority has been a constant thorn in Mr Milosevic's side since he took power in 1987 and later stripped the province of its autonomy. Though kept under the tight supervision of Serbian police, the Albanians have operated unofficial health and education systems for several years and have refused to give up hope of restoring their lost

autonomy, and even turning Kosovo into a republic.

Western governments have made it a condition of Serbia's full return to international respectability that the authorities improve the treatment of ethnic Albanians.

As an another march involving tens of thousands of Serbs passed off peacefully in Belgrade, the authorities were embarrassed by the resignation of their own information minister, Aleksandar Tijanic, who said he had had enough of illiberal media policies. The government, anxious to restrict public awareness of Belgrade protests, has portrayed them on state-controlled television as violent and involving only a handful of alleged subversives.

Mr Tijanic, formerly an independent journalist, said his "liberal concepts" of journalism had clearly been at odds with the views of his ministerial colleagues. Portraying his resigna-

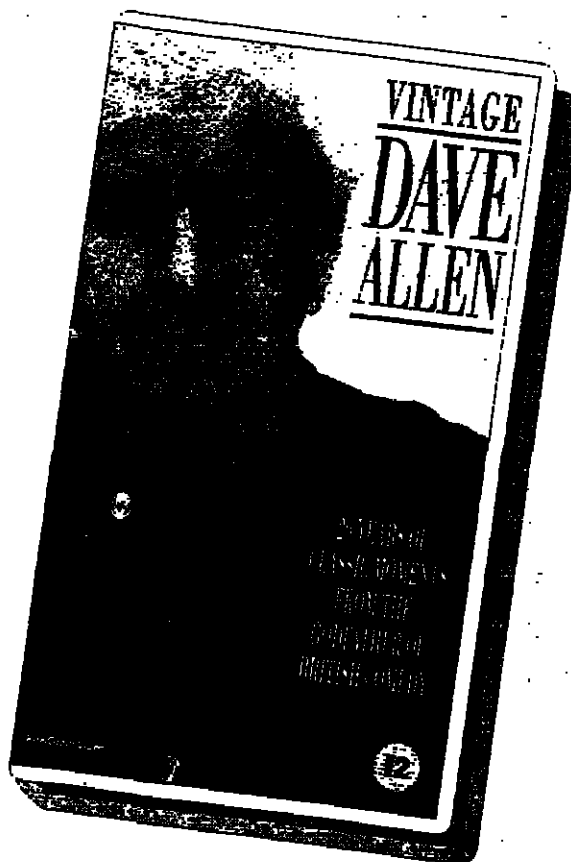
tion as a matter of conscience, he said: "The journalist Tijanic has stepped on the minister Tijanic."

The Socialist authorities meanwhile raised the prospect that they might recognise opposition victories in recent local elections, the issue that set off the protests last month. The supreme court was considering a request from the Belgrade electoral commission to review the fate of city council seats initially declared to have been won by the opposition. The results were annulled under apparent pressure from Socialist Party hardliners, and a re-run of the elections, boycotted by many voters, brought a Socialist majority in the Belgrade council.

The opposition Zajedno (Together) coalition has vowed to continue the rallies in Belgrade until its election victories are confirmed, but its leaders also see a chance to go further and bring down Mr Milosevic.

Leading article, page 17

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Two faces of the new poet on Capitol Hill

Washington — Say what you like about William Cohen, he is nothing if not bipartisan — in matters literary as well as political. Not only did he take issue with Presidents of his own party in Washington's two greatest scandals of the last quarter century, he even crossed the aisle to write a novel with a Democrat.

In that enterprise his partner was the erstwhile Senator and presidential candidate Gary Hart. The end product, a taut and plausible political thriller, was called *The Double Man*. The title sums up the man: William Cohen, literatus of Capitol Hill, student of Latin, Hebrew and Spanish and no mean dabbler in poetry. And William Cohen the defence and security policy expert, now to be President Bill Clinton's Secretary of Defense.

The job was unexpected. Just a couple of months ago, after he had announced he was leaving Congress out of disgust at its bickering and meanness, the 18-year Senator from Maine reeled off to an interviewer a list of alternative careers. Among them, more thrillers, a job with a law firm, or setting up his own intelligence and defence consulting business. But then the President called. Would he consider working in a genuinely bipartisan national security team for a second Clinton term?

Rupert Cornwell profiles Bill Clinton's new Defense Secretary

"It's a job where you lose your personal life, your privacy, your family," says the outgoing Defense Secretary William Perry, the most travelled Pentagon chief in history, who in 1996 has logged more than 200,000 miles. To it, Mr Cohen brings the keenest of minds and a reputation of one of the leading lights on the Senate Armed Services and Intelligence Committees.

But a man who must now run a bureaucracy of 3 million people and an annual budget of over \$250bn has never run a business or served in the military.

In the Senate his popularity is huge. Even among Republican conservatives, his vote as a freshman Representative in 1974 for articles of impeachment against Richard Nixon, and his fierce criticism of Ronald Reagan in the Iran-Contra affair 12 years later, are badges of honour.

Since then Mr Cohen has grown into an *eminence grise* of US defence thinking, opposing the extravagant B-2 stealth bomber while searching for a doctrine to guide US military involvements in the post-Cold War world. And though he has never been in uniform, lines from *A Baker's Nickel*, the volume of poetry he published in 1986, suggest he is fully aware of the consequences of a failure by humankind to keep the peace. "So when the earth goes red with a thousand suns, you can fire your light into the breast of sky a thousand times, star-drilled into all the hydrogen-headed monsters that rise up from earth and sea contemplating great catastrophe."



Stepping lightly: Chelsea Clinton, daughter of the United States' President, at the Washington Ballet's rehearsal of *The Nutcracker* in Fairfax, Virginia. Photograph: AP

African nominations kick off the selection of new UN chief

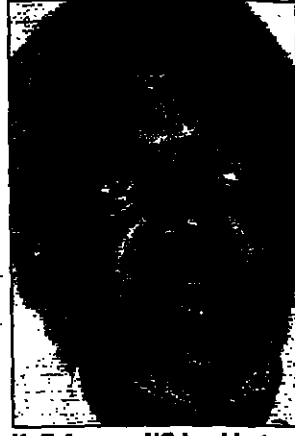
David Usborne
New York

Convinced that Boutros Boutros-Ghali, faced with resolute opposition from the United States, now has no hope of remaining for a second term as United Nations Secretary-General, several African countries were preparing last night formally to submit new candidates for the post to the UN Security Council.

The nominations from Africa mean that the process of choosing a new secretary-general — akin to a high-stakes poker game — can at last get under way in earnest. Concern has been deepening at the UN that unless the deadlock on the issue can quickly be overcome, the council may fail to settle on a replacement before the month's end when Mr Boutros-Ghali's current term expires.

There is also barely-disguised anxiety that the UN, under pressure from the clock and from the US, may be on course to select a new secretary-general who may be considerably less effective or competent than Mr Boutros-Ghali. This could be the ironic and entirely counterproductive result of America's determination to ditch the Egyptian, some diplomats say.

Britain is especially unsettled. As one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, Britain sees the UN as the last world institution where it has pre-eminent influence. It has been dismayed by the recent slide in the UN's fortunes and standing



Kofi Annan: US backing

and believes that his hopes for renewal are linked to finding a first-class figure to lead it.

It has been a bad week for Mr Boutros-Ghali, who on Wednesday announced that he was "suspending" his candidacy, asking that ambassadors hold no more votes on his name but keeping himself in reserve in case no agreement is reached on finding someone else. And the choice of Madeleine Albright, the US ambassador to the UN, as the next US Secretary of State, can hardly help him.

The Africans, who by UN tradition can expect to have one of their own as secretary-general for the next five years, have been under intense pressure from the US and Britain to accept the inevitability of Mr Boutros-Ghali's fate and come up with alternative names. France had hoped to pressure the Africans to stick by Mr Boutros-Ghali.

Divisions were still visible at a French-African summit in Burkina Faso which ended yesterday, attended by African heads of state and France's President Jacques Chirac. The President of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaore, spoke out for Mr Boutros-Ghali. Nelson Mandela of South Africa is said to be backing Tanzania's Salim Salim, the Secretary-General of the Organisation of African Unity.

Of all the African names being floated, the most credible may be that of Kofi Annan. An urbane and soft-spoken Ghanaian, he is in charge of peace-keeping in the UN secretariat. He is widely liked within the UN and is also thought to have the backing of the US. But that support makes him vulnerable, to an instant veto from France.

Other Africans who may be nominated include the former prime minister of Niger, Hamid Algabid, who is Secretary-General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, and the Foreign Minister of Ivory Coast, Amara Essy. Both are unlikely to win much enthusiasm from Britain. A campaign is also gathering for Olara Otunnu, a Uganda-born diplomat who heads the UN-affiliated International Peace Academy in New York.

If consensus does not build quickly around an African, Britain will push the council to move swiftly to begin considering candidates from other regions, with Sadako Ogata of Japan, who heads the UN High Commission for Refugees, as a possible contender in the wings.

Allen loses fight to see adopted daughter

David Usborne

Woody Allen may be enjoying rave reviews for his latest film, but the virile break-up from actress Mia Farrow has dealt him another blow as a New York judge denied him visitation rights to his 11-year-old adopted daughter, Dylan.

In his ruling, Manhattan Supreme Court Judge Elliot Wolk also delivered a stinging rebuke of the film-maker for

even asking for permission to see Dylan, who has been renamed Eliza, who has not seen her father for four years, saying her "therapeutic situation is still too fragile and unsettled". The girl, according to therapist Dr Hector Bird, "remains adamant in her negative feelings towards Mr Allen".

The judge added that Mr

Allen's continued attempts to gain access to Eliza "confirms that Mr Allen still has little understanding or empathy with respect to the emotional well-being of his children".

Never married, Allen and Farrow split up in January 1992 after the actress found nude pictures in Mr Allen's apartment of her older adopted daughter, Soon-Yi Previn. It was later revealed that Mr Allen had had a sexual rela-

tionship with Soon-Yi. Judge Wolk did, however, grant Mr Allen the right to resume his one-hour weekly visits to Satchel, the biological son he had with Miss Farrow, now renamed Sean. Psychiatric experts told the judge, however, that the boy, who is nine, "hates" his father and suffers nightmares and stomach aches as the thought of seeing him.

The allegations to Mr Allen's character stand in contrast to

the generally gushing reaction of critics to his latest film *Everyone Says I Love You*. Mr Allen said, in an interview in *New Yorker* magazine this week, that he may make a film about his legal tribulations.

"The children's interests have not been served at all," he told the magazine. "Murdurers, dope-addicts, people in prison — convicted people — are allowed to see their children."



Woody Allen: Custody battle

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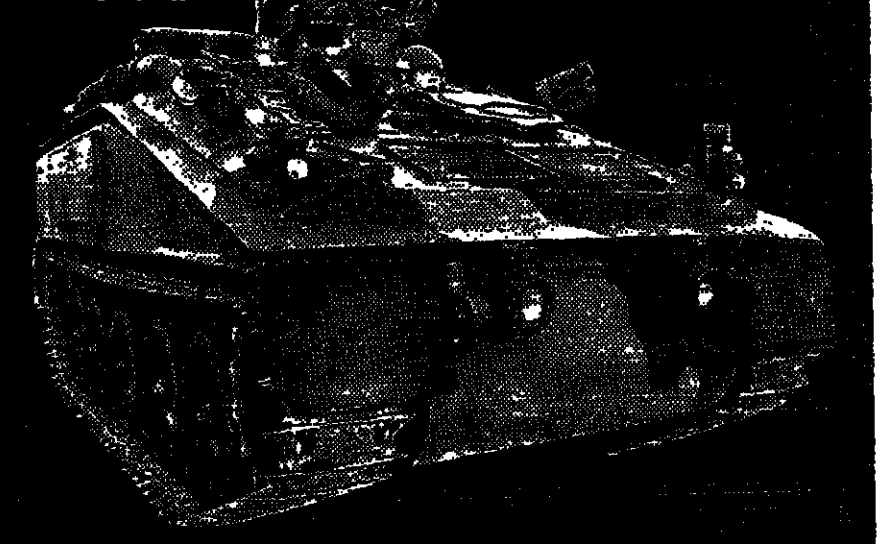
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international

Art and the people: China is trying to win audiences back to a 200-year-old tradition, while

Peking Opera hits wrong note for the masses

Teresa Poole
Peking

How do you like your Peking Opera? With ultra-violet light effects, a moving stage, and English subtitles? Or performed in a renovated old wooden theatre according to all the traditional rules? Maybe the high-pitched singing and recitation is not to your taste; so a new text-and-graphics-only service put out on the Internet and sponsored by the Chinese Ministry of Culture will satisfy your needs.

The two-century-old genre of Peking Opera is considered one of the "national treasures" of China. But it is a treasure in trouble. Television and film have stolen the audiences, and no one is sure how to fight back against the technological age.

Peking Opera is a highly stylized art form, combining falsetto singing, recitation, loud drums and cymbals, and a storyline usually set about 2,000 years ago. Much emphasis is put on costumes, masks and heavy make-up, with little of the repertoire is made up of classics, with little scope for new interpretation. The dramas last up to five hours.

After being crushed by the Cultural Revolution from 1966-1976, Peking Opera staged a revival in the Eighties. But this decade it has suffered what the official *China Daily* newspaper recently described as a "dramatic drop in theatre attendance".

Hu Qiwen, working at the Zhengyici opera theatre, explained the problem. "People above 45 years old really appreciate Peking Opera, but most

of them after they retire don't have much money. The rich ones in their twenties and thirties can spend more than 200 yuan (£16) for a night in a disco, but the Peking Opera does not attract them."

Package-holiday tourists are often the mainstay of audiences. At the Ministry of Culture, an Office for Reviving Peking Opera has been set up. But supporters themselves are at odds over the solution. On the east side of the city is the most recently opened official showcase for the genre, the ministry's plush 800-seat Chang'an theatre, currently showing the *Legend of the White Snake*, complete with ultra-violet light, microphones, recorded backing music, new costumes, and heavy additions of acrobatics and dance. The White Snake, aided by the Green Snake, falls in love with Scholar Yu, is thwarted by a monk and rescued - all in 75 minutes. Tickets cost up to 180 yuan (£14.40).

Pan Hongye, president of the Chang'an Cultural and Entertainment Centre, said: "To make Peking Opera develop and survive, we must reform it, taking into account the environment, the time, and the aesthetic taste of the audience." Mr Pan knows the competition. Rival attractions at the centre include a cinema showing a three-dimensional American horror film, an amusement hall, and 15 karaoke rooms for hire. The whole building was paid for by a Hong Kong property developer.

Over at the Zhengyici theatre, in a tiny alley west of Tiananmen Square, the owner, Wang Yuming, derides the attempts of Chang'an to rescue Peking Opera. Mr Wang, a 35-year-old entrepreneur, has



Talent spot: A contestant performing yesterday in the second annual International Amateur Peking Opera Competition

Photograph: Reuters

spent 6 million yuan (£480,000) of his own money lovingly restoring a 1712 all-wooden theatre to its former glory. He offers nightly performances of such classics as *The Number One Scholar as Matchmaker*, and the *Empty City Strategy*. This is the authentic Qing dynasty experience recreated. "If you use modern techniques, Peking Opera loses its original flavour," Mr Wang said. "I talked with a lot of old

people in their eighties, they said in the past there was not a lot of acrobatics and martial arts in the opera. Chang'an 'misleads foreigners,' he accused. Mr Wang's audience sits at traditional wooden tables and chairs, at 150 yuan (£12) a ticket. His only sop to modern taste is to stage his operas in 90-minute versions, and to offer American almonds and Taiwanese potato chips with the tea. But it has proved

difficult to put bums on seats. When the audience is paying, 50 or 60 is the best turnout so far. Only when Mr Wang offers ticket concessions can he fill the venue for 200 people. Mr Wang's main problem is that he has set up the venture by himself. So, unlike the Chang'an, his theatre is not on the itinerary of the Chinese state tourism industry. "It is very difficult, but the only way is to persist," he said.

Hong Kong to sing from a new song list

Stephen Vines
Hong Kong

It looks as though Hong Kong will be rocking into the new era of Chinese rule armed with a bevy of new patriotic songs and tunes.

Among the officially sanctioned musical works are "Hong Kong is Also Mother's Child" and "Song for a New Century". The official *Guangming Daily* reported yesterday that the short list of 30 approved songs and 16 symphonic works had been drawn from more than 4,000 submissions of budding music writers throughout China and the colonies of Hong Kong and Macau.

The new tunes will be given an airing in the run-up to the handover of power, so that they can be learned by those wishing to take part in the lavish celebrations marking Hong Kong's return to the motherland on 1 July next year. They will play alongside the Chinese national anthem, which calls on the population to refuse to be slaves and struggle for freedom.

The top Hong Kong and Chinese mainland singers are being lined up to participate in the handover celebrations. Hong Kong's pop stars, who are immensely popular in China, are

busy brushing up their Mandarin language skills, because the Cantonese dialect is frowned on in Peking, not least because it is becoming so trendy among young people on the mainland. It appears that, as in most other things, the handover of power in Hong Kong will also involve a substantial clash of styles. If the Governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, has his way, the Union flag will be lowered over the colony to the strains of Elgar's music and 'Highland Cathedral'.

But it is unlikely that Britain and China will be able to reach any agreement on what constitutes suitable music, so they are likely to go their own ways at separate ceremonies for the incoming and outgoing sovereign powers.

China's problem is that the committees responsible for making weighty decisions about the appropriate music and symbolism for the new era have a habit of shooting themselves in the foot. A recent decision made the Chinese white dolphin the symbol for the handover ceremonies. Unfortunately, those responsible for this idea seemed unaware that this is an endangered species, threatened with extinction in Chinese waters by the end of the century.

significant shorts

Australian paedophile inquiry

The Australian opposition demanded an investigation into paedophilia in the diplomatic service after the federal court forced the head of the existing inquiry to stand aside.

The court said Chris Hunt might be biased, since he privately told a newspaper he had turned up no major evidence of paedophile activity. But the government responded by pressing ahead with the original inquiry, established in May, appointing a new head to lead it. *Reuter - Canberra*

Swiss profited from war

A confidential memo from 1948 found in US archives alleges the Swiss government made "a considerable profit" after the Second World War by providing German nationals with phony documents needed for them to flee to Argentina. The memo indicated that the temporary residence document necessary to board a flight out of Switzerland was available for 200,000 francs. *AP - New York*

Czech leader undergoes tracheotomy

Doctors performed an emergency tracheotomy to help Czech President Vaclav Havel breathe after cancer surgery on his lungs earlier this week, a spokesman said. He said the president's condition has since improved. *Reuter - Prague*

Turkish torture

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture denounced Turkish police for physically torturing prison inmates. The committee visited police-run institutions in Turkey in September. *Reuter - Strasbourg*

Bomb attack on Slovak MP

Slovak opposition denounced as an act of political terrorism the bomb explosion outside the home of former MP Frantisek Gauldier who recently left Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar's ruling Movement for a Democratic Slovakia saying it was undemocratic. The MP was not hurt. *Adrian Bridge*

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dition, while



When the air
is thick with
the smell of
the sea, the
wind is strong
and the sun is
low in the sky.
The water is
dark and the
sky is a deep
blue. The air
is thick with
the smell of
the sea.

Kong to
from a
song list



The mist swirls and in the deepening dusk a pheasant perches boldly on a gate in a Suffolk field. Photograph by Brian Harris. 300m lens, 125 at 2.8, ASA 160.film



the long weekend

THE INDEPENDENT • SATURDAY 7 DECEMBER 1996

It's a bold pheasant indeed which perches on a gate in full view of a sportsman with an eye for Christmas. (Delicious roasted with streaky bacon.) Yes, it's the long countdown for parties – find out what to wear on page 17 – and for over-indulgence. The Egyptians had a word for the result of it, as we explain on the games page. Raymond Blanc is not in party mode. The chef reckons there is no such thing as British cuisine. As Serena Mackesy points out (page 27) he clearly hasn't tried Cullen Skink.

Interview



John Walsh meets... John Hegley

He has a kinetic treasury of geeky attitudes. But can you believe in him? **page 3**

Games	2
Chess, Bridge	2
Crossword	2
Arts notebook	3

Books

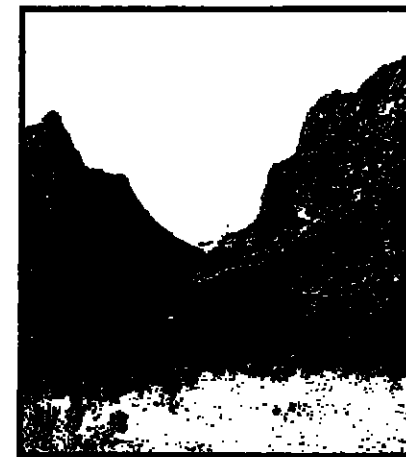


Tales of tea, toast and techno terror

Two pages of the best Christmas books for children from two to teens **page 8**

Aidan Quinn	4
New Billie Holliday	4
Evolution and PC	6
Paperbacks	7

Travel



Texas is a big bad state right?

Simon Calder on margaritas, Stetsons and the whole enchillada **page 10**

Outings	13
Skiing	14, 15
Gardening	16
Duff Hart-Davis	16

Consuming



How you can be chic on the cheap

Party clothes don't have to be expensive to look good says Holly Davies **page 17**

Motoring	20
Money, property	21-26
Weather	27
TV, radio reviews	27

IT'S A BOTTLE OPENER



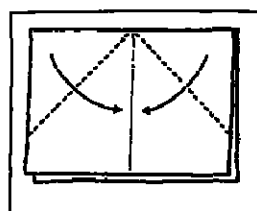
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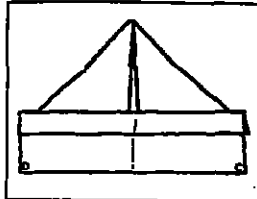
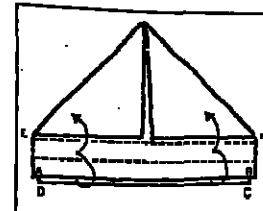
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Fold along the dotted lines ...
for a waste-paper wastepaper basket



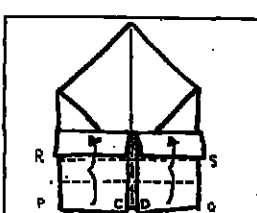
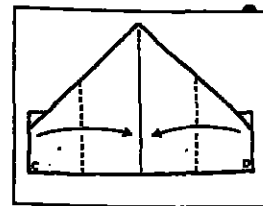
1 Take two sheets of an old newspaper (or one double sheet with the fold at the top). Fold the top corners down to the centre line.

2 Using just the top sheet, fold the bottom edge AB up to the base EF of the triangle.

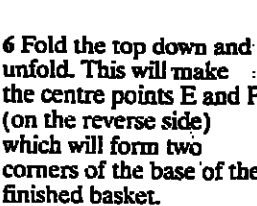


3 Then fold the new bottom edge over the base of the triangle again.

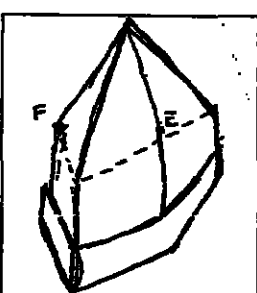
4 Turn the paper over. Fold right and left edges in to meet along the centre line.



5 Now fold at the hem RS and tuck the edge PQ into the band above the hem. Stop here if all you want is a hat.



6 Fold the top down and unfold. This will make the centre points E and F (on the reverse side) which will form two corners of the base of the finished basket.

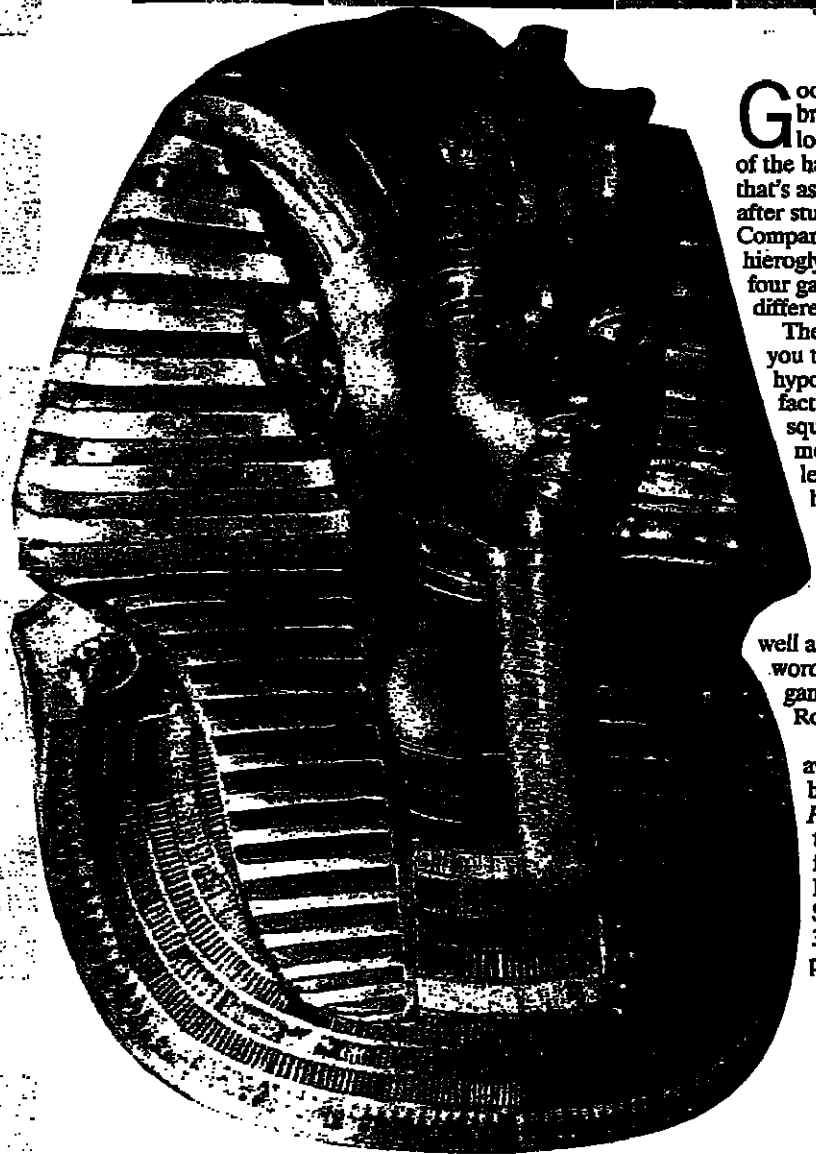


7 Pinch the points E and F, and pull them gently apart, easing down the apex to form a flat base. Turn your wastepaper basket over. (Based on an origami design by Isao Honda).

Made from two double broadsheet pages, you have a wastepaper basket, or, when lined with a plastic bag, a temporary vase. Made from A4 size, the basket forms a pencil holder. Experiment with other sizes of paper for further uses.

Bawn O'Beirne Ranelagh

Hieroglyphs for all



Good morning to the chap above sniffing at the squiggly brick with the word 'rejoice', and the odd-looking bird above a five-legged spider by the light of the half-moon near a sundabot means 'morning'. And that's as near as we could get to wishing you a good morning after studying *Tut Tut*, a new game from the British Museum Company. It's a set of card games based on Egyptian hieroglyphs. You score points, or 'tricks', in any of the four games by putting together the signs to make different words.

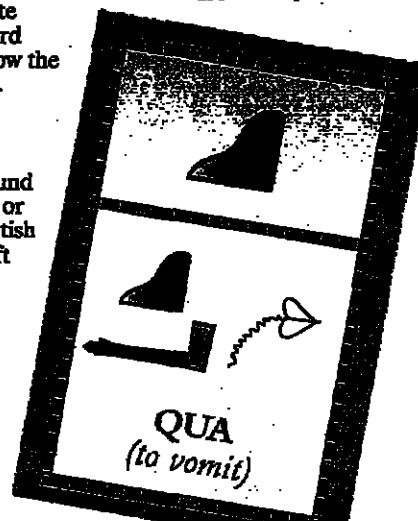
The card below, with the word *QUA* (to vomit), will give you the idea. The two hieroglyphs – triangle with curly hypotenuse, and arm severed below the shoulder – are in fact the letters spelling out the ancient word 'qu' while the squiggle on the right is an 'idea sign' signifying the meaning of the whole word. It was the combination of letter-pictograms and meaning-ideograms that made hieroglyphics so confusing for would-be decipherers.

Tut Tut is the brainchild of actress Claudia McNulty and writer Rachel Allison, who have taken care to ensure authenticity of the hieroglyphics employed.

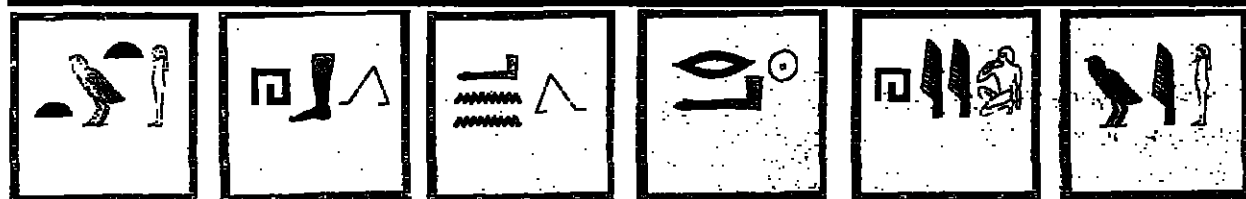
Playing the games teaches familiarity with all 24 letters of the Egyptian alphabet, as

well as 72 complete words. Today, card games, tomorrow the Rosetta Stone.

Tut Tut is available at branches of *Pastimes* around the country, or from the British Museum Gift Shop (0171-323-1234), price £16.95.

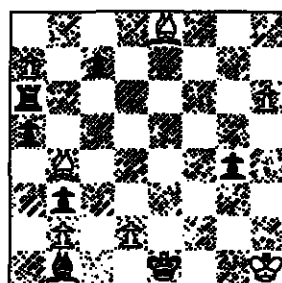


WIN a Tut Tut set of your own



The six cards above each represent a word in Ancient Egyptian. On each card, the symbol on the right indicates the meaning of the whole word, while the other symbols spell out the Egyptian word for it. All we ask you to do is, by logical deduction, match the cards with the words and their meanings. The Egyptian words are: (a) ann (b) heb (c) ui (d) hii (e) ra (f) tut. Their meanings are: (i) sun (ii) to turn back (iii) image (iv) hail (greeting) (v) to tread (vi) mummy. So if you think the first card represents the word 'hii' and means 'mummy', just write 1d(vi) and so on. Please note that 'ui' is not the Egyptian for 'image'. Send your entries to: Hieroglyphics comp., *The Independent*, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. The first three correct answers out of the tomb on 21 December will win a copy of the game.

Chess William Hartston



This splendid concoction won first prize for O Pervakov in a recent study composing tournament. It is White to play and win, and the remarkable thing is that he succeeds in the task by promoting his d-pawn to a queen! Try to solve it if you like, but I'd recommend just playing through the answer and enjoying it.

White starts 1.d3+, cutting off the black bishop's defence of h7. Now 1...axb4 loses to 2.h7, so Black plays 1...Kf1, setting up a threat of Rxh6 mate. White continues 2.Kh2! and now 2...Bxd3 is met by 3.h7 Bxh7 4.Bb5+ Kf2 5.Bc5+ winning. So Play continues 2...Rxh6+ 3.Kg3 Ra6 and now the clever stuff starts: 4.Bb5!

Games People Play...

The first in a new series, in which Pandora Melly discovers how people really spend their game-playing time

No 1 Joe Navarro, 29, Account Manager at Lloyds Bank

I play Monopoly, Scrabble and chess. Also poker and rummy with my sister's kids.

Why Monopoly? Because I like the gambling side of it; I'm an investment kind of person. I play with the family during the festive periods. I've played since I was ten. Me and my sister used to get up at midnight and play when Mum and Dad were asleep. It's completely addictive. The longest game I ever had took three days to complete.

There are Monopoly competitions in which the professionals use real money. There was a tournament recently and the money was put up by the Bank of England. Lloyds was involved in the charity side of it, and there were security guards watching the money. I'd like to play with real money. I've never played in a championship, I imagine you have to write to Waddingtons.

I've got five sets of Monopoly. A limited edition Franklin Mint with gold counters if you like, a wooden board, and the houses and hotels are gold and silver. I haven't played with it as it's a collector's item. I've got a 60th Anniversary Edition, and I haven't played with that either. The European model has France and all the European cities. I think Paris has the Louvre and Britain's got Buckingham Palace.

Park Lane and Mayfair are my favourites obviously, but I do like the orange ones: Bow Street, Marlborough and Vine Street; it's just a deadly area. Monopoly is always different. It helps if you're good at tactics: build as many hotels as you can and then bankrupt the lot of them. An ambition of mine in future.

Waddingtons's *Games Monopoly*: available in de Luxe, Travel and other editions. £11.99-£395 from toyshops, department stores and catalogues.

What happened to: TV-am



The year: 1983

The hype: broadcast news of the highest quality to educate the masses. Anna Ford, Peter Jay, Michael Parkinson, Angela Rippon, and Robert Kee. (Robert who?) were the presenters. A dream team, with the possible exception of the latter, with track record to die for.

The reality: a disaster. Unmitigated. Ratings plummeted. The hype proved to be just what it was: hype and viewers were turned off, and they turned off – en masse. Anna Ford emptied a glass of wine over Jonathan Aitken as she was sacked, and the viewers emptied egg on the IBA (who'd chosen the team from more entertaining options in the first place). Those TV-am egg cups were just not strong enough to hold the runny yoke of public opinion and everything had to change.

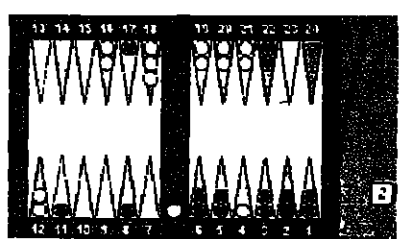
The result: 1983. Greg Dyke, buying out the company. Changing in new presenters, Anne Diamond and Nick Owen, the latter an obscure sports reporter from the Midlands. Of course Anne later had her problems, but things were okay for now. When it was said that his best method of deception was his personality. So when we say obscure we mean unknown rather than esoteric. This was the new approach. Out went news, in came sweaters and sofas. But whilst these were all reasons for a subsequent and dramatic ratings rise – 500,000 to 1.7m, much was owed to the effects of one thing. A puppet rat. At the time a bitter BBC executive commented 'I've never heard of a rat coming to the aid of a sinking ship'. But Roland it was who saved the day – and the company – proving the worth of those founding ideals of quality and in-depth discussion on which it had been built.

Then what? It suddenly struck Margaret Thatcher, at a spare moment in 1992 as GMTV took over, that removing a franchise meant ... removing a franchise. But by then it was too late. TV-am was gone. For her personal favourite and TV-am head Bruce Gyngell it was no more good mornings, but good night.

What now? The biggest casualty was Roland, a big name transfer to the BBC in 1985 who subsequently just couldn't produce the goods. His last series, the imaginatively titled 'Roland Rat: The Series II' at the BBC following in July 1988 from 'Roland Rat: The Series I', signalled the end. 'The Tales of the Rodent Sherlock Holmes' was scrapped. And his video selling just 6,000 was deleted in 1993. When I phoned the BBC they had 'absolutely no idea' where he had gone although it wasn't that great piece of cheese in the sky, that much they could confirm. In fact both he and creator David Claridge are now living in America. But other, more human examples, have suffered too. Michael Parkinson is writing books, Robert Kee attends memorial services, and Anna Ford has started appearing in the morning again, but only occasionally, and only on radio. And you can still go and see the egg-cup topped building in Camden Lock, the only concrete reminder of what once was so glorious. Now filled by MTV Europe. Which has rather more of an idea about how to attract its viewers.

James Aulenast

Backgammon Chris Bray



Today's problem comes from my weekly chouette game at London's Double Fives club. In the position above I was in the box playing Black against a team of three players. I had been lucky to reach this position where I now rolled 5-2. I pondered long and hard over the two candidate plays: 11/4* or 22/17. 8/6. Black desperately needs 5s to escape his back men but I also saw that putting two men on the bar against a five-point board would be extremely strong. If White were to roll a 4 on his next roll I decided I would marginally prefer him to have one man still on the bar.

The doubling cube was the other key factor. I thought that if White failed to enter in either variation I would have a strong redouble but would again prefer the position where White had two men on the bar. There is an old backgammon adage which says 'when in doubt, hit'. So I hit. The team rolled 3-1 staying out with both men and I promptly redoubled. After only 10 to 15 seconds' thought, all three of the team took. My next two rolls were 6-4 and 5-3. The team didn't roll again until I had borne off four men and I easily won a gammon.

I didn't think the take was as easy as the team thought and the next day I used the software program *Jellyfish* to analyse the position. In fact White should drop the redouble and it isn't even close. White loses two points by dropping the double and an average of 3.3 by taking – a huge error.

There are two lessons to be learnt here. Firstly, aggression is a key to winning backgammon – if you can make a play that goes for the jugular, do it! Secondly with two men on the bar against a five point board you need massive compensation to take – in the above position White's broken five point prime is just not good enough.

To all the readers who wrote requesting the return of this column: Thank you. It's good to be back.

concise crossword

No.3164 Saturday 7 December



- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ACROSS | DOWN |
| 1 Cash (5) | 1 Engine (5) |
| 4 Greek letter (3) | 2 Blissful state (7) |
| 7 Heavenly body (4) | 3 Of tender (7) |
| 8 Last (8) | 4 Fearful (5) |
| 9 Street entertainer (5-7) | 5 Spoken (7) |
| 10 Sea-robber (6) | 6 Severely correct (6) |
| 13 Diatribe (6) | 11 Moment (7) |
| 15 US city (3,9) | 12 Angry (6) |
| 19 Swing the lead (8) | 14 Financially disastrous (7) |
| 20 Above (4) | 16 Innocent (5) |
| 21 Cup match (3) | 17 Health worker (5) |
| 22 Follow (5) | 18 Greek island (5) |

Solutions to yesterday's Concise Crossword:

ACROSS: 1 Hem, 4 Error (Emperor), 9 Other, 10 Utensil, 11 Disguise, 12 Polo, 13 Cold-bloodedly, 17 Lobe, 18 Approval, 21 Martini, 22 Gabo. 23 Yesterday Kiss. DOWN: 2 Ethos, 3 Perturb, 4 Emulsion paint, 5 Reel, 6 Respite, 7 Nordic, 8 Alto, 14 Liberty, 15 Derrick, 16 Yellow, 17 Limp, 19 Victim.

SECOND FOLD

Bridge Alan Hiron

Game all; dealer South	
North	South
♠ K 6 3	♠ 10 9 8
♥ 9 7	♥ Q 8 6 5 4
♦ A K J 9 5	♦ 8 7 2
♣ K Q 3	♣ 5 4
West	East
♠ Q 7 4 2	♠ 10 9 8
♥ A 3 2	♥ Q 8 6 5 4
♦ 6 4	♦ 8 7 2
♣ 10 9 8 6	♣ 5 4

There were several different ways of tackling the play in 6NT on this deal from a pairs event. None was irrational, but some worked and some did not. How would you have played?

Six No-trumps was usually reached purely quantitatively. Perhaps INT – 4NT; 6NT, or even INT – 6NT. After the lead of ♠ 10, the declarers could see eleven top tricks, but what's the best way to look for a twelfth? Possibilities included a heart guess, a spade finesse, or some sort of throw-in play if the ♠ A

was in the same hand as the guarded ♠ Q. Declarers who led a heart to the jack at trick two were able to make an immediate claim.

Those Souths who played off their nine minor suit winners certainly put a lot of pressure on West, but there was still plenty of guesswork at the end, especially if West had discarded two low spades in an untroubled fashion to keep ♠ Q, 7 ♠ A, 3.

I am still quietly pleased with the successful line that I adopted at the table. First I took care to win the club lead on the table and drop the seven from hand, giving West, I hoped, the impression that I had only three tricks to come in clubs. Then, looking like a player who needed to develop more than one trick in the suit, I led a heart to the king.

This was better than finessing for firstly, even if West can win with ♠ A, he may not return the suit and South is still alive with squeeze chances and the spade finesse in reserve; and secondly, West might well place me with ♠ K, Q, 10 and – as actually happened – duck smoothly!

Perplexity

Mixed doubles: Moral price laid upon ear print. Those six words hide three loosely related answers. To find them, all you have to do is group the words into three pairs, then rearrange the letters within each pair. A *Chambers Dictionary* prize will be awarded to the sender of the first correct answer

opened on 18 December. Entries to: Perplexity, *The Independent*, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5DL.

23 November answers: Digestive (give diets), Garibaldi (big radical), Shortbread (bet Harrods). Winner: Miss MB Morley (Bolton).

TURN TO PAGE 27...

for the weather, sky at night, Jasper Rees on TV, Robert Hanks on radio and Kerber's new cartoon strip

A poet... but who knows it?

The trouble with John Hegley is that you can't be sure if he means it. He is such a smorgasbord of mannerisms, such a walking anthology of vulnerabilities, such a kinetic treasury of geeky attitudes, you can't tell if he is hamming up the whole thing for your benefit. As he moodily spoons the chocolatey froth of his cappuccino with stern concentration over the lip of his coffee cup, as he carefully mispronounces words like "nuance" and argues about the secret passions of trainspotters, as he sashays across the floor of Islington's celebrated Dome café to demonstrate the complicated dance routine (with potato accessory) he plans to incorporate into his new show, he is deliciously entertaining. But is it true? Does he really take himself seriously?

Mr Hegley has spent 15 years waving his querulous blasts of suburban angst at small crowds in stand-up clubs and pub back-rooms, and gradually finding a nationwide audience. He started out, like every other Alternative Comedian, on the stage of London's Comedy Store in 1981 but since then, his act has broadened to include performance poetry, songs, music (he plays the mandolin), slide shows and his idiosyncratic terpsichorean skills. He has published five volumes of poetry (*Glad to Wear Glasses*, *Can I Come Down Now Dad?*, *Five Sugars Please*, *These Were Your Father's and Love Cuts*), two albums of songs, has a regular slot in the *Guardian's* Weekend, and turns up, with admirable frontier-crossing ubiquity, on Radios One and Four.

He will appear next week at the Hackney Empire's 25th birthday celebration, and in January at the Bloomsbury Theatre, where he will unveil his expressive new dance routine. It goes like this: Hands here, potato transfers one to the other thus, step forward, swirl round, wave hands here, swirl there, and begin to declaim in French... The waitresses are convulsed. Mr Hegley affects not to notice.

"The dance was commissioned by one of the Cholmondeley dancers," he tells me gravely. "They'd obviously seen the potential in my movements. I did a gig in Belgium recently and thought I should try something new. So I took a backing track and put some words with it, and..." He gestured helplessly, to imply a huge and rapturous success. "It's all about commitment to the movement, I think. That's why all children can draw because they're committed to the line they're drawing."

There's something a bit childish, a bit school-boyish, about Hegley, who, despite his 43 years, looks startlingly young. His skin is weirdly smooth, his fright of black hair only slightly greying, his banker specs giving him the look of Elvis Costello's younger brother. And the subjects, indeed the titles, of his poetic works – "At home", "First sex", "A childhood hobby", "Sheds", "The Cub Scout diary", "My father's footwear" – suggest their creator is a family-obsessed teenager with an overdeveloped fondness for the dying fall. If Mr Hegley was a musketeer, he would be Pathos. Time after time his poems end with a stark afterthought, like a final lyric after the music's stopped, like this, entitled "The Miracle and the People":

"the statue on the pilgrimage
is bleeding from the hands
and asking for a handkerchief
but no-one understands
Latin any more"
Or the patriotic "St George's Day Poem", which concludes:

"I like the English heritage
I like to hear archaic English folk songs
being sung in that distinctive nasal way
but not all day"

Some of his poems are tiny squibs, others wild, surreal loopings of anecdote, pub jokes, dreams and coincidences. In their short-pitched way, they're part of a tradition reaching through the Liverpool Poets, Spike Milligan and William McGonagall back to Lear and Carroll. And it's in discussing the great traditions of English poetry, that one encounters John Hegley's Achilles' heel, as he strives to work out his own role on Parnassus.

"Which poets do I read? Oh – Louis MacNeice, though I don't understand a word of it, Seamus Heaney, John Cooper Clarke, Adrian Mitchell. I don't find myself enjoying many of the older poets. I think what I do is more verse than poetry. Poetry's something more difficult. If you don't understand it, it's probably a poem. I've been doing a programme about Seamus Heaney for 15-year-olds on a BBC school programme, talking to Tom Paulin and that, and trying to find a way into poetry for them. But I find it very hard myself. I'm thinking of saying to kids: 'Look, it's like those Magic Eye pictures, you just need to have a special way of looking' – but I haven't found it yet. I know it's in there. I know it's not a con. I've got these books of poetry at home and they're still pretty well looked up to me. I can't see the pictures. I'm looking forward to the day when I get the trick and I can see them at last."

But, I said, to lots of young readers, you're the acceptable image of modern poetry, aren't you? A way into the mainstream? Hegley considered the proposition. "Well maybe so. Maybe I am a way into poetry. But being the turnstile is very different from being the match."

It's a rare sighting, the phenomenon of a poet who doesn't understand the point of poetry. But Hegley is a great frier. An aesthetic empiricist, he monitors his own reactions to the arts world, grate-

John
Walsh
meets...
John
Hegley



fully registering the moment when he rumbles what's going on. "In modern art, for instance, it came to me suddenly. It was Jasper Johns that got me into it. One day I found I appreciated the texture of his paintings. And I allowed myself to stop worrying. But I haven't got it yet with poetry."

He knows he'll make it, however. Hegley is a connoisseur of the transformational moment, when incompetence suddenly becomes sublimity. "I tried to juggle once, and wondered if I'd ever be able to do it, and suddenly I was. And we have a young child who's just beginning to talk now, and you think, one moment she couldn't and now she could..."

It's tempting to apply this image of enlightenment to Hegley's own life, which appears to have been lived, if you follow me, in the wrong order. He was born in Newington Green, north London, moved to Luton when he was 18 months old and became a child of the unlovely Bedfordshire suburb. "We were poor, though not on the poverty line," he recalls. "I remember at 10 asking other kids what their fathers did and most were working at the Vauxhall plant, earning £25 a week. Mine was on £20..." His father was a clerk whose memory causes one of the few shadows to fall over the innocent uplands of his poetry. In "This was my father", he writes: "Apart from skin and bone/ I never knew/ what he was made of/ or afraid of/ in spite of all our time together/ he was one of the strangers he warned me about/ but without the sweets."

On the Isle of Man

On the Isle of Man
remembering that here
it is bad to be gay,
and not within the law,
and I wonder if anyone's made jokes
about entering Douglas before

A Barrow escape

My fortune was told me in Barrow
by someone called Old Madame
Tarot
she said danger is near
it was lucky to hear
'cos I ducked
and avoided an arrow,
but Old Madame Tarot wasn't quite
so fortunate

What went wrong between them? "He would smack me because I used to bully my sister [Angela, two years younger]. I used to make her life hell in any way I could, and I can remember him getting very angry about it. But he didn't beat me – I suppose I bump it up a bit for the work. You've got to increase the level of suffering, haven't you?" His mother, 15 years younger than her spouse, indulged her son in the passion for football that he conceived at the age of 13. In this crucial pubertal year, while the rest of the UK was discovering hippiedom, the Summer of Love, San Francisco and Jimi Hendrix, Hegley was discovering Luton F.C. He became its most passionate supporter (second only to another speedy-gut comedian, Eric Morecambe) and wrote a fan article for *Football Monthly* for which he was paid £1. "The first money I earned as a writer and performer," he says proudly. "Or no, that's not true. I went round as a carol singer, knocking on people's doors, when I was nine. They used to come to the door and say, 'You really sang that didn't you?' Once again, you look at him sideways. Does he really think he was being a "singer and performer" because he once sang "Silent Night"?

He went to a Catholic school, "and felt very much at home with the religious side of things". Did he believe in God? "It wasn't a question of belief. You were just in it. You were – of it." Then Bradford University, where he studied European Literature and Sociology and had a Marxist tutor called Cliff, whose approval he craved, and craves still. "He came to see me in 1992, 16 years after I left university, and wrote me this fantastic cri-

tique of what I was doing. He said it was very 'populist'. Or was it 'popular'?"

The Hegley CV includes spells working in the DHSS in London and as a bus conductor in Bristol. This curious emulative echo of the Prime Minister's early career left Hegley with a handful of rather moving poems, including a moment of revenge on his father in the poem, his father boards Hegley's bus and asks, in a loud attempt to embarrass his son, if he remembers the bus conductor's outfit he had as a boy; "and I said no Dad/ but I remember how you used to enjoy beating me". After that he turned to busking, first with a mandolin, then with a band called the Popticians in Covent Garden Piazza. By 1981, he was ready to try the famously combative Comedy Store. "I was told about it by a couple of comedians called Tony Allen and Tony Green, and they said, 'come down one night, you'll be OK'. And I went, very nervously, down to this hell-hole where gonging-off crap acts was encouraged. And I won 'em over. Somebody said 'Top man', and it meant there was one person in the audience with a completely different brain from me, who I'd spoken to through the performance. It was the last school of learning and, since I was starting late, it was the right place to be."

He was then 28. Having missed out on Sixties teen bliss – "I hated summer holidays and I was useless with girls" – he proceeded to enjoy an ex-post-facto adolescence. He moved into the attic of a friend, Alison, ate every meal in cafés and greasy spoons, went everywhere by public transport, acquired a girlfriend, read voraciously, spent weekends in cafés, pubs and fringe events,

appeared in public declaiming verses about dogs, and toured with his stage chum Nigel. "When me and Nige go away," he once told *The Scotsman*, "I always prefer to have a twin room because it's nice to have a chat before the lights go out."

Today Hegley admits there were some terrible acts about in the early Eighties ("You want me to give you a list of all the people I think are shit?") but defends their worth. "At least performer poets are funny. A lot of non-performers get away with it because nobody can understand them, and you never know if they're crap or not. It's the Emperor's new clothes. I've often wanted to shout out, 'What the fuck are you on about?' His own act, it should be said, has a kind of built-in, heckler-proof self-deprecation. His stage persona is of a crazed innocent who subverts pretension and argues with authority, but who also hates cool people and admits to his own weedy reliance on *l'esprit de l'escalier*.

Discussing this finds Mr Hegley at his most eloquent. "Of course you should always undermine expectations – but first of all you should undermine yourself. And then you can say, anyway, there's nothing wrong with being a trainspotter, as trainspotters can be as grand, as wonderful, as passionate as anyone else, and you go round and round telling them, you're wrong about this, you're wrong again, you must doubt your position always, you mustn't think you know anything, you must have faith in doubt. I don't like people who are too sure of their position, who aren't fluid enough..."

Among Mr Hegley's abiding hatreds are mobile phones and self-important people. "The main

thing that bothers me is people's lack of concern for each other, their self-centredness. And civility is missing now, isn't it? I think people were much more civil in my youth. I think it came from the war and people in the Forces knowing how to behave."

At these moments, Mr Hegley reveals his true colours. After 43 years of puzzling over the world's curious ways, 15 of them spent living out an arrested adolescence, he has now sprung fully-formed into early middle age. It's no surprise to learn that he has abandoned his attic and bought a house in fashionable Islington with his long-standing partner, Jackie. They have a little girl (Isabella, 20 months) who appears in the arms of her beaming Papa in the author photograph on the back of a new Hegley anthology, *The Family Pack*. Isabella was recently baptised in Islington at the same church where her father was watered into the faith. Indeed, Hegley's life – complete with mortgage, spog and volume of Selected Works – seems to be acquiring circularity, roundness, even (dare one say?) maturity.

Had the Luton misfit, the footie-fan-busker-nerd-turned into a solid citizen, a decent wage-earner, a mainstream swimmer? The Elvis Costello glasses flash. "I've had a lot of angst days, and grey days, and days of... anomie is the push word, isn't it? Days when I wasn't relating to the world very well. I've spent a lot of time doubting. And just today, walking down the road, I found myself believing." In what? "Not in anything. It's an intransitive verb. Just believing..." He searches for his Kangol beret and plonks it on his spiky head. Like a do-it-yourself halo.



Hegley, the acceptable image of modern verse: 'Maybe I'm a way into poetry. But being the turnstile isn't the same as being the match'

A thought to move you to tears: Mandelson as arts minister

The Department of Culture and Communications. Does it trip pleasingly off the tongue? No, it does not. But after the next election we might have to get used to it. I understand that the Labour Party's arts policy, to be published in the new year after an interminable wait, will promise an end to the Department of National Heritage and a beginning for the DCC.

One can anticipate the arguments already. We're copying the French, who



David Lister's
arts notebook

have just such a name for their ministry. The new title takes no account of the Department's portfolio for

sport and tourism. And it all sounds a bit Orwellian anyway. On the plus side, it is a forward-looking title, unlike Heritage, which celebrates the past. But that solitary plus point may not be enough to save Jack Cunningham's blushes when he announces the new name.

Will Mr Cunningham ever cross the DCC's threshold though? His admission that he never wanted the shadow portfolio may come as a refreshing change after all the ministers from Mellor to Bottomley who claimed it

had always been their secret desire, but it should ensure that he never has to be Cunningham of the DCC in government. Certainly his unwillingness to cultivate or even meet leading arts bodies, such as the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts, does not indicate a politician who plans to keep his contacts over the next five years.

I hear that Mary Allen, the ever helpful secretary general of the Arts Council, is taking Mr Cunningham to the opera to impress upon

him the glories of his brief. But it may all be too late. Labour arts worthies have been lobbying Tony Blair with the claims of Peter Mandelson, a man who, when he is not making flogging parliamentary reporters cry, can be moved to tears himself at performances of the English National Ballet, on whose board he sits. A man of culture already then, and not exactly a stranger to the media side of the brief. And he's still got several months to brush up on the football and cricket.

A small footnote to cinematic history was made this week. All right, a tiny footnote. But it warmed the heart watching the European premiere of *101 Dalmatians* to see *The Independent* being read in a Walt Disney film for the first time – and in the opening and closing frames, too. The subscriber was dalmatian Pongo's owner, the jolly decent, if strapped for cash, Roger. Halfway through the film, however, evil threatened to triumph as the rich and ruthless Cruella De

Vil could be seen hatching up diabolical schemes in her mansion over what looked suspiciously like *The Daily Telegraph*. There is a moral here, no doubt, or at the very least a module in a film studies course.

There was a telling moment at the Evening Standard Drama Awards when Yasmina Reza won the Best Comedy award for her touching West End hit *Art*. It was not just her film-star looks. One would expect no less of a Parisian playwright. It was more her acceptance

speech. "It is inspiring to win the prize for best comedy," she remarked acerbically, "particularly as I thought I had written a tragedy." As the judging panel consisted largely of national paper theatre critics, I trust they felt suitably chastised. It's dangerous stuff, this categorisation of plays. And it is hard to avoid the suspicion that the division of plays into simple genres has less to do with artistic judgements and more with finding enough award categories to last the coffee and brandies.

arts & books

Cassandra complex

Jazz and the blues – Ms Wilson's got 'em bad and that's very good. By Phil Johnson

Picture the scene: a packed-out audience at the Queen Elizabeth Hall earlier this year awaits the entrance of the new queen of jazz singers, the woman *Time* magazine has called "the most accomplished vocalist of her generation". A Billie Holiday *de nos jours*. They wait a bit longer. And a bit longer still. And then a man comes on stage and announces a previously undisclosed support act, an Irish singer-songwriter with dreadlocks piled high in the manner of footballer Jason Lee, no crime to itself. He settles in and plays a set that no-one in the house wants to hear. Then we're told there will be an interval of 10 minutes precisely before Cassandra Wilson – the new Billie Holiday – appears. A rush to the bar follows, a swift drink, a hurried return to the seats, and then another 20 minutes wait before the show starts.

As the musicians strike up their version of Neil Young's "Harvest Moon", familiar from the wonderful new album *New Moon Daughter*, it's clear that something is wrong. The sound balance is terrible, the acoustic instruments that it should be as easy as pie to mix are a muddy mess. And the star? Well, at best, she's abstracted; at worst, she's somewhere else entirely. We shuffle uneasily in our seats, trying to enjoy it. And, eventually, it all starts to come right, the focus of the music sharpening to a needle point, the nostalgic whine of a National Steel guitar pricking at the heart, as Wilson throws her head back to laugh delightedly, and brushes the hair from her face. But it's now half past 10 and people are starting to leave for their transport home and their babysitters.

The promoters didn't know about the support act, Wilson, it seems, is as much an enigma to them as to anyone else. When I ask for details of the band for her show at Shepherd's Bush Empire on Monday night, they don't know that either; all that is certain is that a lot of hotel rooms have been requested. They are also in the dark about an event I have received a fax about, when, on Tuesday at 5pm, Wilson is evidently due to appear at London University's School of African and Oriental Studies in a workshop for the Yoruba Contemporary Arts Trust. As someone says, all Cassandra Wilson needs to do to further her already brilliant career, is to turn up and look as if she is enjoying herself. But sometimes it seems that even this might be too much for her.

Conversely, it's all too easy to forgive her anything. After all, many great reggae singers seldom bother to turn up at all, and Wilson's two Blue Note albums, *Blue Light Till Dawn* and *New Moon Daughter*, are astonishingly good, extending the range of contemporary vocal jazz to include pop, folk and blues songs, without compromising the fierce integrity of their overall concept. In a good performance, such as that at Birmingham's Ronnie Scott's three years ago, Wilson is capable of

sounding like the best singer you've ever heard, and her accompanists – a post-modern version of a Memphis jug-band – can seem like the most polished and tasteful group in the world. An important extra is that Wilson also looks the part: a mature, sultry beauty with a Billie Holiday gardenia in her distressed, dreadlocked hair, who commands at least as much erotic attention from women as from men. She also moves sensually as she sings, each gesture alive to the nuances of the backing musicians; and her smoky, wistful voice, crucially, sounds natural and unforced, forming an essential counterpart to the band's environmentally-friendly, acoustic rusticity. In short, she's great, but, again like Billie Holiday, she doesn't do herself any favours. Despite the confidence and the poise, she can sometimes seem uncomfortably close to the edge.

In conversation, she's hyper-intelligent, and alert to all the vagaries of the female jazz singer's role. "You can't just be a drug addict and create music like that," she says of Holiday. "There has to be a certain amount of discipline. There's always the assumption that these people came to music very naturally and coincidentally, but I don't believe that. It takes far too much work. With jazz singers especially, there's a particular stereotype at work. They're not looked upon as being innovative, they're just kind of background figures in the history of jazz, and I've always been the kind of person who rebels against that stereotype."

Now a late-30-something (her fulsome press cuttings always neglect to mention her age), she was born in Jackson, Mississippi, to a musician father (the guitarist and bassist Herman Foulkes), and learnt piano before taking up the guitar and performing as a folk singer in clubs. Moving to New Orleans to study broadcasting, she married for the first time (she now has a young daughter), and began to sit in with some of the city's close community of jazz musicians, including Ellis Marsalis, Wynton's dad. Re-locating to New York, she fell in with the Brooklyn M-Base collective led by saxophonist Steve Coleman, with whom she recorded. A contract with the German label JMT led to eight albums of mainly strident M-Base funk (the collective sought to reclaim jazz for a black audience by incorporating the rhythms of hip-hop, not always successfully), as well as the stunning standards set, *Blue Skies* (1988). This attracted a considerable following due to the distinctive, wide-open spaces with which she invested the often claustrophobic atmosphere of the classic jazz-vocal tradition. Truly, a good jazz singer is hard to find.

Her big success, however, had to wait until 1993 and the release of her first album for Blue Note, the astonishing *Blue Light Till Dawn*. The repertoire returned to her early folk roots, mixing jazz standards with blues by her fellow Mississippian



Cassandra Wilson: commands at least as much erotic attention from women as from men

Photo: David Mayenfisch

Robert Johnson, and singer-songwriter classics like Van Morrison's "Tupelo Honey" and Joni Mitchell's "Black Crow". Produced by Craig Street, a jobbing builder she had met in the lobby of her Harlem apartment-house, the album was remarkable – at least for jazz – for its resolute determination to convey an overall ambience, a mood whose governing melancholy and spare, acoustic instrumentation counted for more than its constituent parts. It was still jazz, with cameo performances by some of the most adventurous players on the New York scene, like reeds player Don Byron, but it was also bedst music par excellence. "Tupelo Honey" in particular is the kind of song that you can play as if it were Leonard Cohen, repeating it over and over again as the consoling accompaniment to a solipsistic depression.

This year's follow-up, *New Moon Daughter*, is more of the same, but even better. The catholicity of taste has been extended to take in covers by such unlikely figures as Hank Williams, U2 and the Monkees ("Last Train to Clarksville"), a song she says she has wanted to do for years. It also showcases her own original compositions which have

now grown to become wholly impressive, fully-formed songs, whereas previously they lacked the resonant power of the cover-versions. Typically, the material deals with sex, darkness and obsessive love, even the "little death" of orgasm. "It's about the mood of life," she says. "Wherever it carries you. The album goes deeper into my folk roots, an aspect of my musical personality that hasn't really been explored. Playing the guitar again has brought about a great change in the way I'm perceiving my music; it's now far more immediate and uninhibited, a radical change to the approach I used to have."

She says that she can empathise most with songs of obsessive love, like the standard "Body and Soul", which she has sung for years. "The way that you empower yourself is sometimes to rewrite the words, to change the way you look at a song in order to step outside of the victim persona, but I think the lyrics of 'Body and Soul' are about submission, and that's something I can identify with. It's a kind of falling back into darkness, like boom! I'm in love, and that's a real human emotion."

As a jazz vocalist, Wilson avoids the rather

clichéd heritage of scat-singing, though she still occasionally sings without words. "I prefer to look at it as improvisation," she says. "You move with the music and you move with the moment. It's a kind of spiritual liberation when you sing; it's also once again about submission, and of allowing whatever's going to happen, to happen, a relinquishing of the ego. Sometimes you just have to get that out of your personality so that you can become a vessel or whatever. Music is ritual. The voice is the first instrument and everything is a derivative of that."

New Moon Daughter will certainly reckon in any list of the year's best albums, and at Shepherd's Bush Empire on Monday night, expectations will run high. The danger in becoming the new Billie Holiday, however, is that people begin to expect Billie's habitual personality disorders as well as her moth-in-a-flame intensity, and for Cassandra Wilson this could become a burden that is too hard to bear. Let's hope that there's a change of support act, at least.

Cassandra Wilson plays on Monday night at Shepherd's Bush Empire. Booking: 0181-740 7474

When Irish eyes are smiling

Neil Jordan's 'Michael Collins' is no stranger to controversy but to Aidan Quinn, the man with 'those eyes', the film's message is 'beyond dispute'. He talks to Janie Lawrence

Mention actor Aidan Quinn in mixed company and the response is, well, mixed. And neatly divided according to gender and sexuality. Androphiles – even the sensible mature ones – display undisguised symptoms of envy when they hear I'm off to meet the man with "those eyes".

The other half struggle to place him. Odd when you consider a CV that encompasses being Rosanna Arquette's love interest in *Desperately Seeking Susan*, the eldest brother in *Legends of the Fall* and, currently, Harry Boland in *Michael Collins*.

Still, the sexual division is nothing compared with the political polarisation *Michael Collins* has generated. Despite, or perhaps because of, the hype surrounding its opening last month, it remains No 3 in the current top UK grossers and has already taken more than £5m at the box-office. Yet the debate rumbles on. Is it a dangerous and potentially inflammatory piece of fiction? Or is it simply a laudable and long-overdue portrait of the man who negotiated the Irish Free State.

Dressed in the obligatory American leisurewear – sweatshirt and trainers – Aidan Quinn ponders the brouhaha the film has provoked. One suspects that he's secretly contemptuous of the response. He is certainly bemused. He shrugs and dismisses the "conservative British press". "Historically it's incredibly accurate," he asserts. "What the British Empire did in all their colonies is undeniable and no one of any intelligence can dispute it. The bravest thing about *Michael Collins* is how it makes the Irish culpable in their own story."

With a name like his, it's self-evident that Aidan Quinn has a vested interest in matters Irish. But, unlike many of his countrymen, he points out proudly that he is a first generation Irish American. His father, a teacher, took the well-trodden route from Dublin to Chicago in the Fifties in search of the American Dream. Subsequently, the young Aidan yo-yoed between Ireland and Chicago for most of his childhood, taking care to modify his accent so that he didn't stand out at school. His ties to Ireland remain rock solid.

"I was born in America but whenever I get off the plane I'm instantly comfortable. Because I've actually lived in Ireland, I have a very different view to the romantic one of the third or fourth Irish American generation. Secretly, we laugh at them. In Ireland there's none of that – it's not a big deal."

In a peculiar twist of family fate, Aidan Quinn can also claim a genuine family connection to his role. He recalls how, as a child, he learnt that his



Quinn: 'involved in being an Irish American'

grandmother played her own small part in the Easter Uprising of 1916. Working in a hotel opposite the infamous GPO building, she acted as messenger for both Michael Collins and Harry Boland while helping shelter them from the British authorities.

Quinn's own involvement in current Irish American politics is harder to pin down. "I'm involved in being an Irish American," he replies, stonewalling my question and reaching for another cigarette.

In that case, with the Dublin Summit scheduled for next week, in which camp would he place himself?

"In one that is progressing sanity and peace. I have no patience with sectarian violence," he pauses. "But if you want to know my real opinion, like a lot of people, I've been fighting very hard to be anti-violence and middle of the road."

"Now I have more sympathy for the Republican position because what has happened in the past two years is so unbelievably absurd. The IRA lay down their guns for 17 months and then new preconditions are set up. I think it took Herculean

efforts by Gerry Adams to keep that side quiet. It is the empowered people who are entrenched in unyielding, cynical positions."

If the sentiments are passionate, Aidan Quinn's delivery is not. His replies are so steady, so unerringly calm, I wonder what it would take to rile him. The question amuses him. He tells me not to be fooled. "There's no question I have a short fuse," he says, relieved to be leaving the murky terrain of Irish politics. "When I was younger it was worse."

And, in a parody of a West Coast accent, he adds: "Me and my brother had a good few scraps. Now I think I've learnt to channel it in a more positive manner."

Eighteen years ago, 37-year-old Quinn was a disgruntled roofer. Now he is much in demand. In another historical role, he plays Richmond in Al Pacino's docudrama about Richard III, *Looking for Richard*, out in the UK next month. The film – the publicity hand-out refers to Shakespeare's "gripping drama of power lust and betrayal" – tells the story of actors preparing for the play and tries to explain the playwright's thinking. He also has more bankable appearances later in the year in *Commandments* (with *Friends* star Courteney Cox) and *The Jackals* (with Donald Sutherland).

Married to actress Elizabeth Bracco, Quinn lives with their seven-year-old daughter Ada outside New York, where she attends the local school and he hangs out with the boys playing in the local basketball team.

"In this business you're always working but I try to have six months at home each year. Occasionally we go to a premiere but usually only if a friend is in it or it's a charity and we feel obligated."

He will be spending precious little time in the US next year because yet again he will be returning to Ireland for another film project – a family affair, with his elder brother lined up as cinematographer and his younger brother as writer/director. "I'd love to go there permanently but I think I'd have to be much older before I could do that. When I was over before there was a whole fishing village on the Galway for sale and I showed it to Liam Neeson and said we should buy that. It was so cheap – we could have done it up for friends and family. I'm still looking."

Finally, what about that adoring public of his? How does it feel to be described as "sex on legs"? He throws his head back. "That whole thing makes me laugh because it's so absurd. It really has very little to do with who you are."

A sentiment rather belied by "those eyes".

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The road to nowhere

THEATRE | Licked a Slag's Deodorant Royal Court Upstairs, London

Jim Cartwright's new play offers no trite solutions in an evocative portrayal of brutality, despair and loneliness. By Paul Taylor

The Royal Court has certainly been trading in some attention-snagging titles of late. First, there was *Shopping and Fucking* – a name that gives a pretty fair indication of which way the wind is blowing. Now, there's Jim Cartwright's *Licked a Slag's Deodorant*, an appellation with a rather more elusive range of suggestion. Could it be, perhaps, a play about a simple-minded soul who has performed the aforesaid activity in the hope of freshening his breath before setting to work on the slag? Then again, are we talking about deodorant that is still in the roll-on dispenser or deodorant that is now amputated? It would make quite a difference.

In the first few seconds of Cartwright's stingingly funny, wrenchingly sad production of this two-hander, the mystery is solved. Looking like he was born in an ill-fitting Oxford suit, the excellent Tim Potter's starring-eyed, sensitive Man – a vulnerable, working-class, middle-aged and now mummy-less mummy's boy – reveals that he licked the roll-on deodorant while the crack-addicted Slag (an admirably unsparing Polly Hemingway) was out of her room. A gesture of child-like dependency? In all events, it's the only comfort he gets

at this stage, for the Slag, desperate for a fix, has taken his money and run, leaving him to the brutal mercies, in the street outside, of Fatman, the drug-gangster.

Taking the couple through a disjointed dark night of the soul and then into the most surreal form of supportive cohabitation yet devised by man, the play harks back, in its prose-poetry idiom, to Cartwright's landmark *Road*, that *Under Milk Wood* of the urban scrapheap. You might dub this genre "Road-rage", if it weren't for the fact that Cartwright's no-hopers tend to take their anger out on themselves. They don't analyse their predicament politically; instead, courtesy of Cartwright's heightened associative language, they pore like proletarian Pevsners over the architectural detail of their existential plight.

It's with her ravaged sensibility that Hemingway's superb Slag (limbs one huge nervous tick; eyes on fire with wit-flecked contempt) grades the men who use her, from the "snobs who fuck like they're cutting up a fish" to the "slow lads who look and look". "They've lynched my cunt," she declares, but the political overtones of that verb are characteristically not followed up. Proving that Cartwright is on a contin-

uum with Beckett and Bennett, the Man sees the whole of his lonely experience in elegiac terms. Take the haunting way he imagines the last days of another cut-off neighbour who may have committed suicide: "The kitchen floor's dirty and his cheek's stuck to it... and there's a bottle of bleach and there's no one, and the telly's playing for days and days and through the night in the dark it's a lantern show rolling over his dead back."

William Dudley's railigned and banquet-ringed circular set enhances the appalling evocativeness of the show, allowing no barrier between the rapid wetness of the streets and the terminal damp of the interiors. Is this 50-minute chamber work defeatist? Is it sentimental? The latter not at all: the couple do not "reform" one another in any yucky Hollywood way. The Man, for God's sake, takes to living under the bed where the desperate-for-crack Slag continues to play her trade wily (so to speak) nifty. Defeatist? Well, only if you believe that the sole decent way of dramatising these problems is through an agitprop piece that confidently indicates the Way Forward.

To 21 Dec, Mon-Sat 9.30pm, RC Upstairs at the Ambassadors, WC2 (0171-565 5000)



No way out: the Slag (Polly Hemingway) and the Man (Tim Potter)

Phoenix rises

FILM
Dark Blood
NFT, London

Dark Blood was the film River Phoenix was making when he died of a drugs overdose. Instantly the stuff of legend, the movie was hastily abandoned, the rushes hidden away, and no more was heard of it – until now.

The BFI has recently been running what it calls "The Script Factory", a series of live events at the NFT in which actors do read-throughs of unproduced film scripts. Having already served up David Lean's *Nostromo*, this vaguely necrophile season concluded by casting just about the hottest young actor around, Jonathan Rhys-Myers, in the creepy Phoenix role in *Dark Blood*. Remember that name because you'll be hearing a good deal more about Rhys-Myers in 1997.

There are pretty obvious problems with these kinds of stagings: the scripts were written for cinema and should be cinematic, but *Dark Blood* could easily have started life as a play, with its one-set feel, its sense of claustrophobia and confinement. The story is as follows: pompous British actor Harry and his American wife Buffy break down in the Arizona desert and end up having to stay in an isolated shack with a very disturbed young man known only as Boy. Boy is a snake-frying peyote-chewing survivalist, a loner who carves Indian-style dolls and is obsessed with pornography and guns. This charming sociopath nevertheless somehow encourages Buffy to flirt with him, with disastrous consequences.

It would have been a meaty role for Phoenix (and pretty similar to the part he played in his last finished film, *Silent Tongue*). Certainly Rhys-Myers, whom we are told has never even been on a stage before, fell on it with wolfish relish. Myers is absolutely magnet-

ic, acting Charles Dance, who made a very good Harry (the Jonathan Pryce part in the film), off the stage. It sent chills down the spine to think that we might well be watching the next Phoenix or DiCaprio in the making.

As a staging, the evening worked surprisingly well, even though the actors sat in chairs, with minimal props, for most of the time. It was Myers who dispelled occasional laziness from the more seasoned hands tempted to roll through on autopilot, and Clive Higgins as Buffy picked up many flashes of Myers' youthful vigour. On the right hand side of the stage sat two narrators, Veronica Hicks and Ted Mavnard, also sitting, whose word-paintings of the pitiless but beautiful desert gave a haunting air to the proceedings.

Jim Barton, who wrote the screenplay, directed the staging and talked very briefly at the beginning. There was a sense of history about the whole occasion as Barton recounted the fateful filming, and his hopes that the movie will still be made (on a low budget, perhaps even with Myers, he told me afterwards). It certainly deserves, to happen, although one day, no doubt, computer technology will be such as to allow Phoenix to reclaim his starring role, albeit in simulation (rather like Brandon Lee's *The Crow*). It seems that Phoenix in fact completed some of the most extreme scenes before he died, including his character's violent end, a mere two days before his own in the Viper Room in LA.

But happily it wasn't the ghost of untimely death that hovered over the performance. It was the ghost of promise in the thin frame of another hungry, youthful actor.

Roger Clarke

Caution: hay-thresher at work

POP Faust The Garage, London

"The group's usual instrumentation will be supplemented by amplified power-tools, arc-welder and hay-threshing machinery," promised the fier for Faust's Rock Aktion Party 96 at the Garage. As the group who first introduced the notion of industrial music back in the early Seventies, the power-tools and welding gear were pretty much par for the course, but it's not every day you get to see agri-tainment on a London stage, so the threshing offered a probably unrepeatable opportunity.

As it happens, this isn't the only added attraction laid on by the legendary Krautrock ensemble. For one piece, a cement-mixer is drafted in to provide a sluggish, grinding rhythm while

the group's bassist takes to the trumpet, combining to produce an unearthly noise, which sounds something like an elephant's graveyard at rush-hour. Oddly, it's not in the least unpleasant, just different. The "usual instrumentation" in Faust's case isn't exactly like your average pop group's, anyway: the customised synthesiser, tapes, guitar, drums and bass are routinely accompanied by a stageful of pipes, oil-drums, hammers and things that go "clunk!" very loudly. Since their introduction of metallic percussion into the rock vocabulary, groups such as Test Department, Pere Ubu and Einstürzende Neubauten may have popularised the notion further, but none have approached their task with such obvious art-terrorist gusto.

Encased by a metal fence in front of the stage, a be-goggled sculptress beavers away as the group plays, welding chunks of metal together into a mutant humanoid form, then using a grinder to send showers of sparks out across band and audience alike. For a moment, one wonders about fire-safety precautions – but only for a moment, because by the third "tune", the bassist has taken off his clothes, leapt into the audience and made his way over to a large board at the side of the room, at which he proceeds to fling paint from several large cans, to the accompaniment of a tape-loop of a mother calling her children down to dinner. Pinned to the board, it transpires, are several hundred blank album sleeves, which,

once dry, are used as covers for a limited edition of 300 records.

It's not all noise and industry. Interspersed between the more demanding pieces are a few pristine miniatures featuring classical acoustic guitar and gently tinkling percussion. At the opposite extreme, the threshing machine doesn't disappoint when called on to provide a fitting conclusion to the night's work: straddling it like a colossus, the bassist dumps into its hopper sack after sack of dried leaves, which are blown out across the audience like Rail-tracks' worst nightmare. I don't know whether it was art, but it was certainly entertaining. Then again, I didn't have to clear up after it.

Andy Gill

Jasper Rees on TV and Robert Hanks on radio now appear on page 27

	<p>THE PLAY Plunder</p>	<p>THE TV DRAMA Moll Flanders</p>	<p>THE FILM Home for the Holidays</p>
<p>overview</p>	<p>Silly asses, young gels, upper-class twits, a battleaxe, a boulder and lots of cut-glass accents rush around in this Ben Travers farce. Written in 1928, it centres around a bungled jewellery robbery on a country house weekend. Griff Rhys Jones, Sara Crowe and Kevin McNally star in a production directed by Peter James.</p>	<p>A four-part dramatisation for ITV of <i>The Fortunes and Misfortunes of Moll Flanders</i>, a bawdy romance by Daniel Defoe, adapted by the ubiquitous Andrew Davies, directed by David Attwood and promising 17 bedroom scenes. Starring Alex Kingston as the "17th century fox" of ITV's huge poster campaign.</p>	<p>Jodie Foster's latest directorial outing is a film about family values put to the test over Thanksgiving. Her cast is ripe with acting talent from young mother Holly Hunter and her gay brother Robert Downey Jr, Anne Bancroft and Charles Durning as their parents, to Geraldine Chaplin as a mad aunt.</p>
<p>critical view</p>	<p>Paul Taylor was not amused. "Not even Griff Rhys Jones's gentle genius for this genre can endear you to <i>Plunder</i>." "It has passed its sell-by date," agreed the <i>Guardian</i>. "Lacks the right sense of fluster and sufficient farcical pace – plodding where it should canter," noted the <i>Standard</i>. "Not exactly oversophisticated. But who expects Travers to be Coward or Feydeau?" Indulged the <i>Times</i>. "A show for Rhys Jones fans," conceded the <i>FT</i>. "A richly entertaining evening and pleasure is increased by the knowledge that prigs in the audience will be having a terrible time," smirked the <i>Telegraph</i>.</p>	<p>Thomas Sutcliffe was deeply grateful that ITV was screening primetime drama. "Even if Moll had been played by Samantha Fox... I would have tried to be encouraging and, in truth, it was a lot better than that." "Terrific entertainment value, stylish and fast-moving... I shall be watching their every move, using slow-motion replays where necessary," salivated the <i>Mail</i>. "Has pace but lacks rhythm, as if rushing through the boring bits," sniffed the <i>Times</i>. "Kingston gives a throbbing performance approved the <i>Guardian</i>. "If the Olympics had existed, she could have bonked for Britain," yelped the <i>Mirror</i>.</p>	<p>Adam Mars-Jones sighed at the inevitable mellowing from snow to slush. "As neutral as water – but nowhere near as useful." "Foster works everyone too hard in an effort to lighten up," judged the <i>Standard</i>. "Perceptive moments are followed by rowdy excess. Best appreciated in small doses," hawered the <i>Times</i>. "Pushes the gags too hard... may look better on the small screen," winced <i>Time Out</i>. "Bad drama, or, more accurately, no drama," pronounced the <i>Spectator</i>. "Sixty four turkeys were used in filming the Christmas dinner, which makes 65 in all," shuddered the <i>FT</i>.</p>
<p>on view</p>	<p>At the Savoy Theatre, London W1 to 1 Feb. (0171-836 8888)</p>	<p>Parts 3 & 4 on ITV on Sunday & Monday at 9pm.</p>	<p>Cert 15. On general release.</p>
<p>our view</p>	<p>This play could possibly be saved by good direction. That is precisely what's missing here.</p>	<p>A suitably saucy romp.</p>	<p>Initially less saccharine than you expect but ultimately disappointing.</p>
<p>DEADLY POOR OK GOOD EXCELLENT</p>			

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MEGASTORES

beyond entertainment

Better than bacteria

Colin Tudge takes issue with the PC line on evolution

Life's Grandeur by Stephen Jay Gould, Cape, £16.99

Life's Grandeur, Gould tells us, is "a companion volume of sorts to my earlier book, *Wonderful Life*." And so it is. That was largely spurious as well. Both are magnificent flights of rhetoric, unique in the canon of 20th-century science. But, in the end, they're a massacre of straw men, most of whom were heavily milled well before Gould set about them. Gould's prose is indeed brilliant if a shade otiose – must trees always be "arborescent"? – but its fury signifies nothing very much and what it does is largely beside the point. It really is time that somebody pointed this out.

Thus, in *Wonderful Life*, Gould told us that living things have not really become more varied this past 500 million years as we thought they had, because the Burgess Shale fossils of the Mid-Cambrian period contained a host of weird and wonderful forms that don't exist any more.

In *Life's Grandeur* he assures us that evolution does not lead to biological progress. In this, in fact, most modern biologists would agree with him but for the wrong reasons. Many, like Gould, have reacted too impetuously to late 19th-century bullshism. Thus, in the years after Darwin, many biologists and philosophers (but not Darwin himself!) tried to argue that natural selection was bound to produce super-intelligent creatures like us, since intelligence is sure to be advantageous. They went on to argue that human beings are superior to other creatures because we are "more highly evolved", and suggested that some sub-sections of the human species – races – are superior to others for the same reasons. Finally, they suggested, such superior creatures have a "right" to rule over the others. Thus, under the borrowed cloak of Darwinian theory, they reinvented Genesis in its least attractive and most authoritarian mode.

Gould is quite right to expose such junk, and did so many years ago in *The Mismeasure of Man*. But we should not throw out intriguing babies with sullied bathwater nor replace 19th-century metaphysics with 20th-century political correctness. For the crude post-Darwinians made three mistakes Gould does not clearly spell out; and he falls into fresh errors of his own. First, their science was bad; so, for example, there is no biological reason to suggest that any human race is superior to any other. Equally mistakenly, they conflated "progress" with "destiny", and argued that the presence of any superior-seeming life form was somehow inevitable. Third, they conflated biological progress with moral advance, which is bad philosophy. As G. E. Moore later pointed out, what is "right" cannot simply be inferred from what is "natural". So the idea of evolutionary progress has been perverted, but if we reject it out of hand we will miss some very important insights.

To provide himself with a windmill at which to tilt, Gould first tells us that "we" are "driven to view evolution's thrust as predictable and progressive in order to place a positive spin upon geology's most frightening fact – the restriction of human existence to the last sliver of earthly time". Is that frightening? Really? Spiders, perhaps, if their legs are too long, but old rocks? But let us suspend incredulity and see where he is leading us. It is to tell us that we define progress according to criteria that are "obviously concocted, if we would only be honest and introspective enough about our motives, to place *Homo sapiens* atop a supposed heap."

Even Gould has to admit that this is a bit strong, for not everyone accepts "the maximally simplistic account of a single [evolutionary] ladder, with humans on top". On behalf of the half dozen or so who do, Gould assures us that *Homo sapi-*

ens in practice occupies just one twiglet on an "floridly arborescent" evolutionary tree, that there is nothing about us or any other creature to justify any thought of progress, and that indeed there are no evolutionary "trends" by which such progress might be gauged. In fact, we are evolutionary dead-ends and general washouts, and would treat other creatures with more respect if only we realised this. Well, I certainly support Gould's conclusions that we should treat our fellow creatures better. But the argument that leads him there is simply an exercise in schoolmashism, of the kind that 12th-century abbots used to dazzle unruly acolytes. First, Gould castigates Victorian metaphysics not with biology, but with a metaphysics of his own by appealing to the slippery concepts of dominance and success. Then – a neat piece of tautology – he defines success in a way that makes his argument irrefutable. Thus he equates "successful" with "numerous" so that

creatures like us or peregrines or elephants must always rank below bacteria because there are so many more of them. And I thought it was because bacteria are smaller, which gives them more room.

But if we argue that a scientist should appeal to what is measurable, and if we do as every philosopher should and compare like with like, then trends, and progress, come roaring through the evolutionary tree. In lineage after lineage, creatures become measurably better at what they do as the generations pass. Any engineer can see that modern fish swim better than ancient fish. Their skeletons are lighter and more flexible, the bone is where it needs to be, and there are more places to attach a more intricate array of muscles. Furthermore, lineage after lineage – mackerel, herring, salmon, tunny – independently developed these refinements. Similarly, pigeons, peregrines, swallows and albatrosses independently improved, measurably and unequivocally,

on the flying skills of Archaeopteryx. Each line shows progress, objectively measurable by the people – engineers – who have the clearest view of what progress means.

To be sure, no Cambrian era zoologist could have predicted that we, *Homo sapiens*, would come on the scene 500 million years later, or that any creature would develop our particular brands of consciousness and language. Evolution does depend to a large extent on time and chance, so we can't predict any particular outcome. But the lack of such precision does not imply an absence of trends. That sentence would develop in some life form was absolutely on the cards.

Life itself was always likely, and is probably common throughout the universe. Early living slime was always liable to divide into discrete organisms. Organisms were always likely to separate ecologically into autotrophs, which feed themselves like plants, and heterotrophs, which eat autotrophs as animals do. Autotrophy and

heterotrophy each evolved many times on earth, in scores of lineages.

Heterotrophs can feed more efficiently if they are sentient – and sentience has also evolved many times. And sentience is always liable to upgrade into mental processing, as octopuses, insects, and vertebrates independently demonstrate. Among vertebrates, mammals' intelligence generally has a more flexible quality than birds'; and among mammals, porpoises, monkeys, squirrels, pigs and dogs independently evolved impressive intelligence from the small-brained mammalian ancestor that they shared about 85 million years ago. If group after group independently pursue the same line then we can infer a trend, especially if we can find very good reasons why such a trend should have been favoured.

To argue, as Gould does, that there is no such trend because the majority of creatures – that is, bacteria – did not grow more intelligent is sophistry and sleight of hand. Bacteria did not have the option of intelligence and neither would natural selection have favoured them if they had, for an introspective salmonella would lose out to one that focused on the more immediate task of decomposition.

The fact that bacteria did not become extinct when clever mammals appeared has nothing to do with the case. The two categories of creature occupy different niches and rarely compete directly. Significantly, the small-brained mammals which are obliged to compete with brainy ones have largely gone by the board except when they occupy very special niches – like koalas or moles.

In short, when you look at nature objectively you do see progress in lineage after lineage. You see definite trends that do not represent simply an adaptation to a particular niche but a more general response to the universal problems of gravity, behavioural flexibility and so on.

No one lineage was destined to give rise to *Homo sapiens*, but it would always be on the cards that some creature would develop some kind of intelligence, and many have done so. To argue otherwise is to erect a metaphysics that may be more PC than that of the imperial Victorians, but is still no more acceptable. *Life's Grandeur*, like *Wonderful Life*, is obfuscation. Life is indeed both wonderful and grand, but it is still too short for such stuff.

Communicating by ewe-mail: Laptop Sheep from Sowa's Ark, an enchanted bestiary by Michael Sowa, (T&H)

on the flying skills of Archaeopteryx. Each line shows progress, objectively measurable by the people – engineers – who have the clearest view of what progress means.

Finding your Nietzsche in the 21st century

Geoff Dyer discovers the human – all too human – side of a great iconoclast

Nietzsche in Turin by Lesley Chamberlain, Quartet, £10

The first thing I did on finding myself in Turin a few years ago was to visit Piazza Carlo Alberto. Massive construction work was underway. The noise of grinding metal and pounding jack-hammers was deafening. It was impossible to stay for more than a few minutes, but I was standing where Nietzsche – who aimed to "philosophise with a hammer" – suffered his final breakdown.

According to legend, in January 1889, Nietzsche, having witnessed a cab-driver flogging his horse, flung his arms round the nag's neck and collapsed. He had shown signs of increasing mental instability for some time – the brain-rotting consequence of tertiary syphilis. Thereafter, apart from odd interludes of lucidity, he remained helplessly bed-ridden for the last 12 years of his life.

Lesley Chamberlain's love of Nietzsche lured her to Turin for a prolonged engagement with the philosopher's life and work. Her book recounts an intellectual and physical pilgrimage taken to befriend the strange, solitary figure who claimed to "walk among men as among fragments of the future". A century later, when it is difficult to imagine how we would recognise ourselves without recourse to the inventories Nietzsche compiled of those fragments, he still has need of such friendships. As recently as 1992 John Carey sought in *The Intellectuals and the Masses* to get away with a travesty of Nietzsche's thought. Camus was right: "we shall never finish making reparation for the injustice done to him."

Chamberlain's first gesture of reparation is to greet Nietzsche as he arrives at

Turin railway station in spring 1888. She offers a detailed itinerary of the philosopher's daily life over the next ten months. In a period of astonishing creativity he composed *The Case of Wagner*, *Twilight of the Idols*, *The Anti-Christ* and the brilliantly deranged autobiography, *Ecce Homo*. We come to know Nietzsche – and Turin – intimately in these pages. This is extremely helpful, for Nietzsche's "philosophy" was often a coded expression of a day-to-day existence in which solitude and illness "magnified every common perception" to the point of frenzied illumination. A fertile combination of infirmity and resilience, Nietzsche was obsessive about climate, diet and exercise.

The regularity of his working habits, however, could not prevent the increasing wildness of his thoughts. Unknown

outside a small circle of converts, he was derided by local children, who filled his umbrella with pebbles which cascaded over him when it was opened. His megalomania became both petty – a waitress kept back the sweetest grapes for him, he was sure; he had only to think of someone and presto! a letter from them arrived – and colossal. His books were among the greatest gifts that had ever been vouchsafed to mankind; he would become "a destiny"; his fame would exceed all reckoning.

About the grapes and letters we can't be sure, but his delusions of posthumous grandeur were spot on. A vehement "anti-anti-Semite", he even hinted, in *Ecce Homo*, at the hideous irony by which his work would be distorted – thanks, largely, to his sister – to provide

a philosophical underpinning for Nazism.

Initially, Chamberlain's stance is *French Lieutenant's Woman*-ish but she gradually eases back from quasi-novelistic interventions in favour of spirited exposition. This is almost literally a running commentary. Nietzsche liked to work while out walking; he distrusted any thoughts that came to him indoors. This puts many commentators at a disadvantage. Alexander Nehama's *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* is an example of the kind of library-bound analysis to which Nietzsche in Turin is such a sprightly alternative.

Much of its spring comes from the way that it seems to have been written on the move, in hotels or on trains to and from Turin. This gives her writing great immediacy but her book would have benefited from some sedentary revision. There are

far too many mistakes in it.

There are other weaknesses. A few speculative passages are grounded in conjecture and some of the ideas could have done with closer scrutiny, but the momentum and angle of approach should carry readers over such hindrances in anticipation of the insights to come.

She is right, for instance, to emphasise that although Nietzsche has been packaged in images drawn from German Romanticism, he is more accurately seen as Munch pictured him in his "allegorical portrait": the harbinger of the rippling, curdled colours of European expressionism. "How to move out of the 19th century"; that was the question Nietzsche's readers found posed in his work. But for us, as Chamberlain's book demonstrates, he also points the way into the 21st.

All your life you're dreaming

Peter Parker tags along on some nocturnal excursions

The Tiger Garden: A Book of Writers' Dreams edited by Nicholas Royle, Serpent's Tail, £9.99

A sure way of making people's eyes glaze over is to announce: "I had the most extraordinary dream last night". Yet to the dreamer those nocturnal excursions are extraordinary. They both suggest a life beyond the quotidian and reveal imaginative powers many people would be unable to access when awake. Writers might be thought to have a particularly interesting library of dreams and, more importantly, ought to be able to recount them with skill.

Nicholas Royle had the clever idea of inviting over 200 writers to send him accounts of their dreams. No one was paid and all royalties go to Amnesty International, an organisation which spends much of its time attempting to alleviate waking nightmares. "In a bid to retain the oniric atmosphere," he writes, "I have allowed those dreams scribbled down in haste to remain...as a result, there will be infelicities of language, there will be liberties taken which these writers would not dream of taking in fiction." The problem with

many contributions, however, is not that they have been dashed off but that they lack style. With some notable exceptions, there is not a great deal here that is interesting as writing. This might not matter if all the contributors were celebrated figures: even the hastily scribbled dreams of Doris Lessing, Will Self, Christine Brooke-Rose, Michael Ondaatje, William Wharton and Hilary Mantel would be worthwhile. There are many more well-known writers here, but an equal, if not greater, number of names unfamiliar outside genre fiction. One would think that writers of SF, fantasy and horror would be particularly good at dreams, but this proves not always to be the case.

In the wonderful introduction to *Behold, this Dreamer!*, his classic 1939 anthology of dreams and related subjects, Walter de la Mare warned that "waking recollection" of a night's travels into unknown realms "is difficult to translate into those obstinate and artificial symbols, words". Some of Royle's contributors (Nicholas Freeling, Giles



Tiger visions by Nicholas Royle and John Oakey

Gordon) try too hard, some hardly at all. Fortunately, others have overcome the difficulty triumphantly. Desmond Hogan's recurring dream of Nazi persecution and ghostly children has been made into a beautifully shaped short story; Liza Cody's vision of a hospital where the uniquely warm blood of Sephardic Jews is drained into a central-heating system in order to coddle the premature twins of the Empress of China is very well

recounted and authentically bizarre; Patrick McGrath's four sentences about falling into the carcass of a chicken the size of a house is alone worth the cover price.

Jack Kerouac's observation that "the fact that everybody in the world dreams every night ties all mankind together" provides Royle with an apt epigraph. It is reassuring to learn, for example, that even famous people dream of famous people.

Robert Browning, Paul McCartney, Eric Cantona, Tony Curtis, Anthony Burgess (with boyfriend), Picasso and Dvorak (duetting) and Salvador Dali all put in cameos. Michael Carson and Bernard MacLaverty dream of royalty, while D.J. Taylor dreams of A.S. Byatt, who is unable to return the compliment, dreaming instead of Iris Murdoch. (By way of compensation, Taylor appears in the dreams of the editor.)

Contributors relive unfortunate episodes from their past. Louis de Bernières returns to Sandhurst; Jonathan Coe is still playing keyboards with The Peer Group. Suspiciously few admit to any sexual episodes – not even Fiona Pitt-Kethley.

"Dreams, alas, resemble far too frequently a tale told by an idiot" wrote de la Mare, "signifying even less than the literature he may reserve for his noontide." While *The Tiger Garden* reveals less of the creative processes than its publisher claims, it is nevertheless an oddly beguiling, and beguilingly odd, collection.

Victorian values

Boyd Tonkin enters a satirical time-warp

A Vicious Circle by Amanda Craig, Fourth Estate, £15.99

Storms in teacups don't come much frothier than the spat that postponed this oddly Victorian panorama of high and low life in 1990s London. Some months ago, a journalist read a proof and decided that he recognised himself in Amanda Craig's mordant anti-hero. Lawyers lumbered into action; Hamish Hamilton dropped the novel; Fourth Estate picked it up. A new preface talks archly of "satirical archetypes" with no resemblance intended, etc. (Tell that to the model for portly "Ben Gorgie", editor of "Grunt", who promotes the "dirty axle" school of fiction.)

This quarrel helped to prove Craig's point. Throughout the book – and in accordance with its core metaphor – intelligence and talent turn inwards, reflect themselves, chase their own tails. Beyond the media's hall of mirrors, where "venom is the elixir of success", single mums on sink estates languish while dying vagrants moan in run-down A and Es. Head and heart, word and deed, culture and society: all drift as far apart as the "Slouch Club" elite and the

tower-block poor, now linked only by Dickensian bonds of secret kinship or household service. Coincidence alone unites the scum and dregs.

The social-climbing pundit Mark Crawley reaches the top in "a monstrous glide of savage indignation". He dumps his kind Irish girlfriend Mary for the gilded heiress Amelia, daughter of the Maxwellian magnate Max de Monde (a premise that recalls Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point*). Pregnancy deepens Amelia's while Mary befriends Adam, a martyred gay novelist. And, together with a saintly medic, Tom, the heroic lone mother Grace opens up our views into an abyss of suffering.

At first, Mary wreaks her revenge by out-bitching Mark with "tawdry, spiteful rubbish" as a reviewer. Then she re-invents herself as an angel in the house while Adam dies slowly of AIDS ("the usual"). Meanwhile, the fleshly fixer Ivo Sponge – literary editor and serial proper – embodies a venal journalistic market ruled by "fear and favour". Vice and Virtue thump each other senseless like pup-

pets in a Soho Punch-and-Judy show. Only Amelia's pregnancy and motherhood – with magnificent scenes of a life "devoid of logic, radiant with feeling" – really shift into a higher gear. Otherwise, the assault on "cruelty and callousness" still leaves room for some pretty coarse-grained phrase-making. A Filipina maid has a "simian gaze"; nurses show "bovine good nature" and so on. You wonder if Crawley's snobbish, carping spirit has triumphed after all.

Craig finds herself trapped in the vicious circle of the mainstream British novel. Terrified of too much intellectual strain, it can only voice social unease in ever-fiercer bouts of join-the-dots moralism. Thus Max de Monde may fly a helicopter, but as a plutocratic villain he doesn't add a lot to Tolstoy's Melmonte. Indeed, our satirical novels have changed much less than the world they try to scourge. This one delivers plenty of gratifying wit and rage – but for a glimpse into a media hell that belongs to our *fin-de-siècle* rather than the last, read *Ful-love* by Gordon Burn as well.

SPY 12050

Making a drama out of a crisis

John Campbell on the master builder's shaky foundations

Henrik Ibsen: A New Biography by Robert Ferguson, Richard Cohen Books, £25

At the time of his death in 1906 Ibsen was second only to Tolstoy as an internationally acclaimed writer. His 70th birthday was celebrated in Scandinavia like a royal jubilee, and marked respectfully around the world. His sombre dress, something between a priest and an undertaker, made his image recognisable from Peking to Buenos Aires. He shunned publicity, yet his unchanging habits, sitting always in the same seat in the same cafe, made him a tourist attraction. And every two years he delivered a new play – each more bleak, enigmatic and personal than the last – for his public to argue over.

Ninety years on the plays are still performed as regularly as ever. Ibsen has never gone out of fashion. He is a revolutionary who has not dated. It is no exaggeration to claim, as Robert Ferguson does, that Ibsen "created the modern theatre." When he switched in mid-career (around 1877) from rambling historical-poetic dramas to tightly plotted, small-cast plays treating contemporary domestic crises with unflinching psychological realism he invented a new genre which opened the way to Chekhov, Strindberg, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Albee and Pinter – as well as much cinema and television drama.

Ferguson's is the first new biography since Michael Meyer's triple-decker 25 years ago. It comes trailing rave reviews from Norway and boasts some new material on Ibsen's early struggles; but Ferguson's main difference from Meyer is in interpretation. He presents a less reverential, more personal portrait of the man and his demons. He is also good on Scandinavian cultural politics and Ibsen's ambivalent attitude to emerging Norwegian nationalism.

Ferguson has more time than most

English critics to Ibsen's early plays – such as *The Vikings at Helgeland*, *Love's Comedy* and *The League of Youth* – which are rarely if ever performed here. He sees *The Pretenders* as a tragedy comparable to *Macbeth*; makes a good academic case for the huge unstable verse-drama about Julian the Apostle, *The Emperor and The Galilean*; and sees *Brand* and *Peer Gynt* as unchallengeable masterpieces.

By contrast, he is a stern critic of the "modern" plays, though not always a convincing one. For example, he thinks *A Doll's House* flawed by Ibsen's "contempt" for the character of Nora's husband, Torvald Helmer, whom he dismisses as a monstrous caricature. Yet a letter from Ibsen to Laura Kieler, the real-life model for Nora – who committed exactly the same crime as Nora for exactly the same reason and whose husband reacted in the same way as Torvald – shows that Ibsen believed that Laura/Nora should have thrown herself on her husband's mercy, and that it was his duty to protect her. Torvald is not a villain, but simply reacts properly by his – and Ibsen's – lights. What is extraordinary about Ibsen the artist is that he could put so much creative empathy into Nora's side of the argument as well.

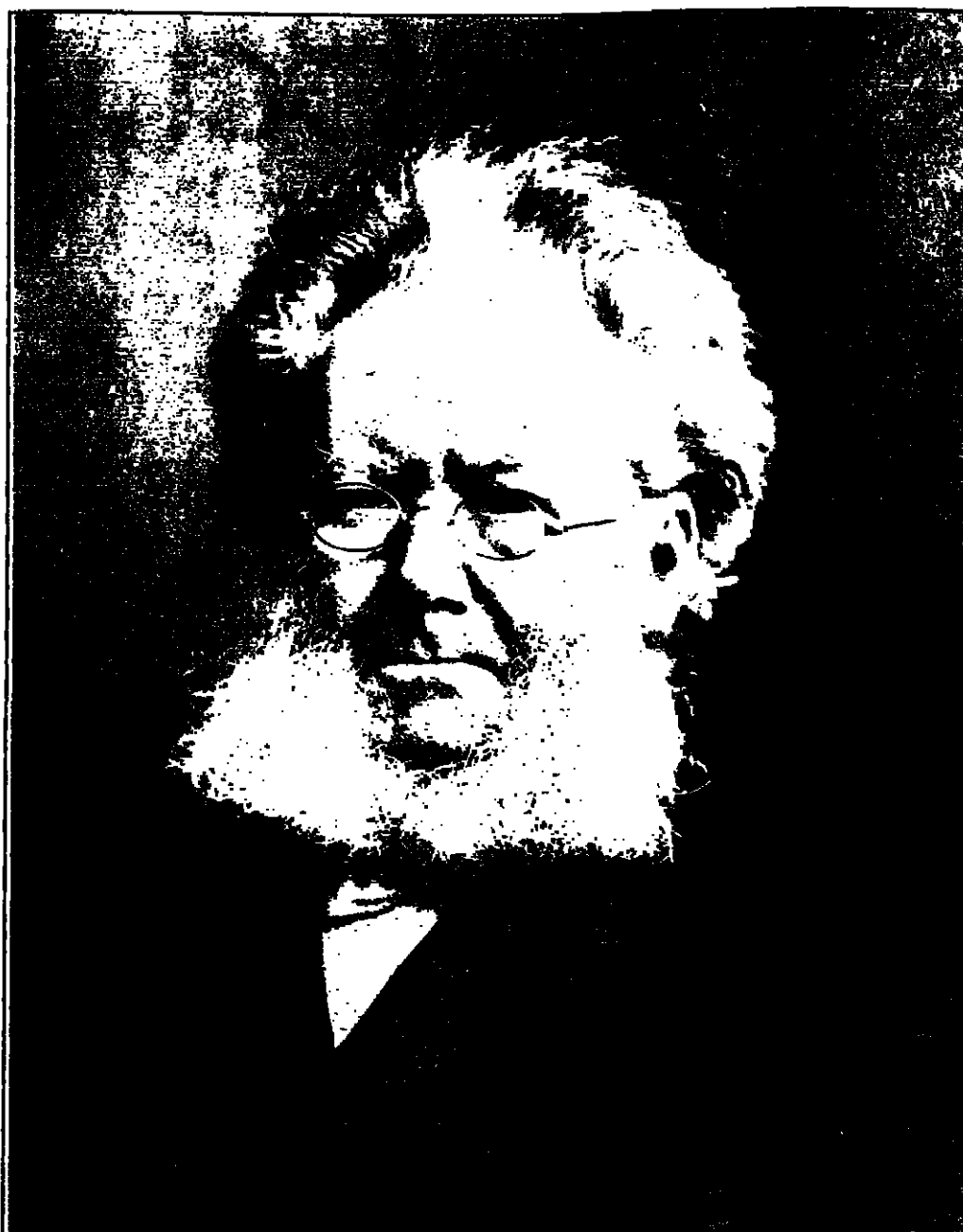
Few writers display a starker dichotomy between art and life. Outwardly, he was the most respectable bourgeois who ever lived, obsessed with status and honours. Yet from somewhere inside himself he was able to conjure rebellious spirits like Nora, Hedda Gabler and Rebecca West. Ibsen always denied that *A Doll's House* was a feminist tract, although it still carries a feminist charge today. Yet it also bears a universal message, for Ibsen put a lot of himself – his other self – into Nora. So it is with all his characters. Ferguson's biography is at its best in teasing out these conflicts and tracing their recurrence in his plays.

Two traumas scarred his childhood and adolescence. First his father, a prosperous merchant, was ruined in unexplained circumstances when Ibsen was seven. The social humiliation in a status-conscious society drove young Henrik in on himself, but also drove him on: he grew up solitary but intensely ambitious. Social disgrace haunts his characters from Nils Krogstad to John Gabriel Borkman.

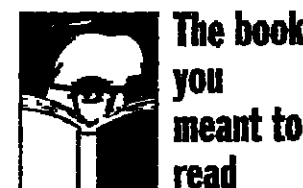
Second, he fathered an illegitimate child at 18. His early struggles were exacerbated by the obligation, enforced by the courts, to pay maintenance until the boy was 15. Ibsen buried the episode and had nothing to do with mother or child for the rest of their lives. But the secret haunted him and the ghost of illegitimacy stalks his plays.

After that one expensive aberration he largely suppressed his sexuality. He did marry, however, and was exceptionally fortunate in his wife, Susanah, a woman both strong and supportive. Later, they grew apart and Ibsen developed an old man's sentimental *tendresse* for a succession of younger women. His last four plays all explore the theme of a dying marriage; but in his very last, *When We Dead Awaken*, the sculptor Rubek returns to his first love and they die together in an avalanche.

The wonder is that Ibsen managed to mine so much from such a narrow seam of life. He once suggested that he deliberately closed off the sociable, anarchic side of his character as a way of concentrating his energies on his work, like damming a river to generate electric power. It is a telling image. Ferguson's excellent biography helps to illuminate the process. But it is still a miracle.



Henrik Ibsen: "the ghost of illegitimacy stalks his plays"



The Alexandria Quartet (1957-60) by Lawrence Durrell

Plot: Durrell regards *The Quartet* as a single work. Set in pre-war Alexandria, the first three parts view the same story from different angles; the last part provides a genuine sequel.

In *Justine*, the novelist, Darley, recalls his life with Melissa, the dancer, and love for Justine, wife of the Coptic banker, Nessim. The book bulges with words including the artist Clea; Purswarden, a novelist who kills himself; and Balthazar, a doctor.

Balthazar has the eponymous doctor criticising Darley's manuscript of *Justine*. It appears that Nessim and Justine were plotting a coup on behalf of Jewish and Coptic groups. Darley was a pawn: Justine's real love was for Purswarden.

Mosbolve is told in the third person. David Mountolive is the conventional British ambassador. Purswarden worked for him "undercover" in Alexandria and defended Nessim against charges of conspiracy. Nessim is revealed as a gun-runner. Purswarden cannot face the implications of his misjudgement: his suicide is finally explained. Darley narrates *Clea*. In war-torn Alexandria he falls for Clea. Once aloof, she is now the reverse. She runs off and loses her hand in a harpooning accident.

Theme: Love and fiction. Love is a fleeting illusion. Fiction must capture life's relativity.

Style: The language gives off a heady scent of decay.

Chief strengths: The evocation of place is matchless. Durrell is one of the few British writers who can write about sex without facetiousness or vulgarity.

Chief weakness: "Only the city is real." Alexandria swamps the characters, who drown in the steamy exoticism. Durrell's philosophising is repetitive and trite.

What they thought of it then: *The Quartet* anticipated the Sixties. Durrell is mind-expanding, highly coloured and self-conscious. The books were especially trendy in France and America. In Britain, Durrell was regarded as a bit of a fraud.

What we think of it now: Durrell's reputation has collapsed. Critics of the British post-war novel hardly take him into account.

Responsible for: Tourists booking holidays to Egypt in the hope of finding unmentionable delights behind the kasbah. Tourists returning home with diaries steeped in glutinous prose.

Gavin Griffiths

Kissing love goodbye

Lucasta Miller enjoys a sentimental education

Zoë Trope by Amanda Prantera, Bloomsbury, £14.99

Those who have already met Amanda Prantera's heroine in *Proto Zoë* will have been looking forward to finding out how that engaging child would grow up. You don't have to read the earlier book, though, to be able to enjoy this next instalment of Zoë's sentimental education, in which she finds herself ready for love, but serially disappointed by what the male sex has to offer.

The novel is constructed as a series of bite-sized chunks, one chapter in turn for each of the men in Zoë's life, beginning with the prototype – her father – and ending with a tantalising glimpse of Mr Right. Narrated by Zoë herself, in a confiding, anecdotal voice, it opens with a flashback to childhood, which shows what a confusing notion of love the 10-year-old must have picked up from observing the bitter-sweet family romance played out between her father and grandmother.

Don't be deceived, though, by the apparent diagnosis of an Electra Complex into supposing that Prantera takes a psychoanalytical

approach towards her heroine. Zoë wouldn't be able to charm us if she didn't have emotions we could identify with, but she is fundamentally a fantasy, not a patient on a couch with a complex inner life. In the same way, the upper-class world in which she moves has a fairytale patina to it (most characters live in grand country houses and don't have to work for a living); and the action of the novel appears to take place in a timeless, nostalgic bubble.

For someone so obviously attractive – she is as full of life as her name implies – Zoë seems to have pretty bad luck with men. The golden boy who gives her her first snog at a party turns unaccountably nasty; the dashing French aristocrat with the Byronic limp exudes an unpleasant odour; the nice Cambridge undergraduate with a sense of humour is hopelessly unfanciable; and one can only surmise that the Italian low-life must have appealed to her more masochistic instincts. One begins to sympathise with her father who, like Mr Ryder in *Brideshead Revis-*

ited, enjoys baiting the young men she invites home by adopting perverse opinions. Yet one of Zoë's most appealing characteristics is her ability to walk away unscathed: she doesn't let it get her down when she discovers that her balding philosophy professor wasn't interested in her mind after all, and she can resist the lures of a wealthy Roman Don Giovanni.

At only 147 pages, and with big margins at that, this is a tiny book, but one which has been beautifully put together by someone who really knows her craft. Its wit and rather Mitfordish charm are highly seductive, and despite its undoubted whimsy it manages to avoid being sentimental. The prose is impeccable and there are just enough moments of poignancy – as when Zoë contemplates the early death of a best friend – to prevent it from being too sweet, though these shadows are never allowed to grow into anything really upsetting. This is classy light literature for the hedonistic reader – the novelistic equivalent of some sophisticated pudding crowned with spun sugar.

Tall boy's story

Carol Birch applauds an enriching tale of true love

The Giant's House by Elizabeth McCracken, Cape, £9.99

Elizabeth McCracken's debut novel is a small masterpiece, profound, subtle and harmonious. It presents the memoir of Peggy Cort, small town librarian of Brewsterville, Cape Cod: a cynical, meticulous woman whose leisurely narration greets us with the words "I do not love mankind". In 1950, at the age of 25, Peggy's only passion is her work, the joy of which fills her with "fear and love and courage and endless wonder," making of a mundane job an art and vocation.

"A library," she says, "is a gorgeous language that you will never speak fluently." She acknowledges that she is odd, poignantly capturing the unplanned ways in which we stumble into our identities: "Every morning I walked along the gravel path from my house to the sidewalk, thinking, 'Is this who I am? A lonely person?'"

Then into her library walks James Carlson Sweet, eleven years old and over six feet tall. Until his death at the age of 20, eight and a half feet tall and still growing, Peggy loves James. She accompa-

nies him through each stage of his life: the death of his mother; the teenage years when despite his popularity it becomes apparent that he will never get the girl; celebrity; the snapping cameras of tourists; the intrusions of the medical profession; even an appearance with Barnum and Bailey. Throughout, James remains an ordinary boy, a nice kid who reads a lot, teaches himself magic tricks out of books, embraces hobbies with youthful enthusiasm and dreams of travel and adventure. But James is a boiling plant, weakened by his great size.

The Giant's House has several dimensions. There is a fairytale motif, with a shoe that fits and an unimaginable lover. There is the straightforward chronicling of the practicalities of being different, the unaccommodated paean of praise to order and precision. But above all, this is a love story, one so unusual and delicately handled that it fits no tradition. It says far more about that overused word, love, than any dewy romance or torrid sex feast. "O girls," says

Peggy, "what is said passionately evaporates, it's what's said as a matter of fact that is precious and lasting as a brand." McCracken's depiction of an unfashionable, faithful, selfless kind of love, at its most profound in the everyday, sticks in the mind and enriches. It is rare indeed in modern fiction.

This is good, hard, clear prose, precise and unpretentious, poetic when it needs to be but lacking the self-regarding bombast and mercurial courting of the special effect that mars much new writing. McCracken's work is refreshing and exhilarating, deeply moving but absolutely lacking in sentimentality, deserving of accolades at a time when certain adjectives – stunning, brilliant, remarkable – have become debased through overuse. When these words are routinely tossed around to describe the undistinguished or moderately good, how is the reader to describe the real thing? Perhaps I should just say that it's been years since I've read anything as good as this novel.

Paperbacks

By Christopher Hirst and Lucasta Miller

Ian Fleming by Andrew Lycett (Phoenix, £8.99) The perfect example of a second-rate subject resulting in a first-rate biography. Unsurprisingly, Fleming turns out to be a moody, snobbish, fantasist with a penchant for sadism: "All women love semi-rap." When his wife's pregnancy forced him to lay aside the whip, he channelled his energies into *Casino Royal*, the first volume of Bond.

The Hallelujah Revolution by Ian Cotton (Warner, £7.99) Despite its intriguing subject – the boom in charismatic Christianity – this book is hard going. The reason for the profusion of references, one-word sentences and forest of exclamation marks is made plain on page 34, where there is a long quote from Tom Wolfe – a risky stylistic model. Cotton discovers much of interest: a cultist who depends on prayer for income; believ-

ers who insist they can cure illness by talking in tongues; a woman whose faith leads to bankruptcy.

Hannibal by Ross Leckie (Abacus, £6.99) A superior sort of toga-saga in which the Punic generalissimo tells his own story. Free of awkward "chaisms," Leckie's vivid style is enthralling, particularly in the childhood section. The politics of Hannibal's makeshift alliances, the corrosion of his humanity and the ghastly mechanics of war, are brilliantly described.

Madame Blavatsky's Baboon by Peter Washington (Secker, £12.99) A spritely canter through the "western guru" who emerged from the cult of theosophy and influenced artists from Yeats to Isidore Wood. Blavatsky was the first and oddest, a 17-stone chain-smoker who cobbled together theosophy from the novels of Bulwer-Lytton. The spiritual baton

was taken up by the "self-pitying and egotistical" Krishnamurti, along with Rudolf Steiner and Gurdjieff. Though his book is packed with revelations, Washington does not judge the colourful figures who fill our religious vacuum.

No End of a Lesson by Anthony Nutting (Constable, £9.95) Nutting's promising parliamentary career was brought to an abrupt halt when he resigned as Minister of State at the Foreign Office because of Britain's deceitful and ignominious role in the 1956 Suez crisis. His revealing account of this sad, bad business shows admirable objectivity. Occasionally, deep emotion breaks through Nutting's prose: "I hope I shall never know a sadder moment than the last quarter of an hour before I left the Foreign Office for good."

The Shrine by Cristina Odone (Phoenix, £5.99)

Workmanlike, if clichéd, first novel from the ex-editor of the *Catholic Herald*, set in an Italian village. The shrine in question is proposed by the local priest when a beautiful girl begins to see visions of the Virgin Mary. The rest of the plot centres on the fading fortunes of the Ferrari family: when the old patriarch dies, the son and daughter are forced to sell off the land to pay his debts. Various love affairs, dodgy deals and pasta recipes spice up the action, but the novel remains stronger on local colour than on theme or characterisation.

A Burmese Legacy by Sue Arnold (Seppre, £6.99) Although Sue Arnold had the most English of upbringings, both her grandmothers were Burmese. In her youth, she felt painfully ambivalent about her Eurasian heritage – which is unsurprising given the racism she encountered both at board-

ing school and as a young journalist. In 1985, she decided to rediscover her roots, and visited Rangoon in search of her relatives. The resulting memoir is chatty but introspective, with fascinating insights into colonial history and a chilling account of the oppressive regime in present-day Burma.

The Drowning Room by Michael Pye (Penguin, £6.99) While researching a history of New York, Michael Pye found the name Grete Reyniers coming up again and again in the law court reports of New Amsterdam, the 17th-century Dutch settlement on Manhattan. He was intrigued by this abrasively litigious woman, who worked as a prostitute and money-lender, revelled in foul language, and used her broomstick to measure the members of visiting sailors. This compelling novel is an imaginative reconstruction of Grete's life.

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'Independent' reviewers select the best books and tapes for tots-to-teens this Christmas

Tea, toast and

tech

Christina Hardymont on thrilling reading for the 8 to 12s

Horror is hot" says the librarian of our local middle school. "The kids can't get enough of it." So should we be indulging their desire for Goosebumps, Point Horror and all the other ghoulish ghostly titles? The answer is yes. Fear is an important instinct, but today most of us live such safe lives that we rarely experience it. When we do, it can be disproportionately devastating. Children's urge to practice in the shallow-end with fictional danger makes very good sense.

But is any stretch of the imagination better than none? There is not much harm in teenagers reading R L Stine, Diane Hob and Caroline B Cooney, the unholy American trinity of horror, smartly omnibused this year into "triple doses of terror" (Point Horror, £6.99). Pacy, racy reads, their moral sense is as sound as that of Enid Blyton, and their prose as easily assimilable by those who would make heavy weather of ritzier writers for the age group. Although there are enough gruesome red herrings to fill a crate of Mallaig kippers, there's always a tall tousled blue-eyed chap in the background to bail out the terrified heroine.

There are, however, more fertile literary pastures for children in search of shivers. Cold Shoulder Road (Red Fox, £3.50), the most recent in the thrilling alternative historical world of Joan Aiken's *Wolves of Willoughby Chase* series, is now out in paperback. Look out too for her riotously imaginative new horror story *The Cockatrice Boys* (Gollancz, £10.99). It opens with impatient airline passengers grumbling at the wait for their luggage ("A one-legged rheumatic snail with athlete's foot could have fetched it faster than those handlers are doing it"). What eventually appears is a horrific cargo of griffins, cocodrills, mandragoras and other bestial horrors who rapidly lay the British Isles to waste. Can a little girl with unusual powers, a resolute boy drummer and a colourful gallery of martial volunteers on a Heath Robinson train defeat them?

Dick "Babe The Sheep-pig" King-Smith takes on an altogether meatier and more macabre theme in *Godhanger* (Doubleday, £9.99), a nail-bitingly exciting story of how a sadistically cruel game-keeper is worsted by the godlike eagle Skymaster. There is an enormous amount of natural lore in the book, observed both lyrically and humorously, but this is nature red in tooth and claw, not Farthing Wood. Flies nuzzle the guts of a shot rabbit in chapter one, and things don't get more cheerful. But children prefer the truth about the natural world to cosy euphemisms and can take this sort of thing in their stride. Andrew Davidson's vibrant full-page wood engravings are a magnificent embellishment of a wise, moral and implicitly Christian book which will surely become a classic.

Gillian Cross has also moved on from the cheerful horrors of her brilliant *Demion* Headmaster books. *Pictures in the Dark* (Oxford, £5.99) is dramatically kitted out in deep purple with a staring eye on the front cover. The contents are no less uncanny. Is Peter Luttrell profoundly evil, or merely an oppressed little boy who may or may not be a shape-shifter? Are there really others in the river, or are altogether darker forces at work? This is a peculiarly haunting story which works on several levels.

Stephen Elboz is an exciting new literary talent who is rapidly establishing a reputation for unsettlingly supernatural stories. Even the radio "cowers in a corner like a small brow-beaten creature that knows when to be quiet" in the time-war house-hold of Dr Malthus, the setting of *Ghostlands* (Oxford, £5.99). Ewan finds a strange but enchanting companion in the ghost of his host's dead son, but soon finds that he is going to have to save Ziggy from a sinister coven of ghostnappers who operate from the nearby horror theme park. A shudder a page, scintillatingly written.

Younger children whose parents quail at the strong meat mentioned so far will relish the sharp wit, graceful phrasing and playful fantasies of W J Corbett's *The Dragon's Egg and Other Stories* (Hodder & Stoughton, £10.99), a loosely linked collection of tales of dragons large and small which are both delightfully original and rich in reference to English folklore. It is enriched by Wayne Anderson's winningly winsome illustrations.

The fun is also more fast and furious than spooky in Peter James's *Getting Wired* (Gollancz, £9.99), the first in what promises to be an informative as well as amusing series of junior thrillers called *TechnoTerrors*. Written with gusto and deftly plotted, it focuses on a highly computer-literate group of friends in the top form of a financially-pressured primary school. School bully Jason Glick threatens to ruin all their efforts to raise the cash to join the Internet and establish a web site, but intelligence and ingenuity triumph.

Finally a gentle, wise gem of a book: Jostein Gaarder's *The Christmas Mystery* (Phoenix House, £14.99) handsomely published and enchantingly illustrated by Rosemary Wells. Buy it now and give it straight away, as it's an advent calendar in itself, with an episode for each day of December. It is the story of a journey of a Norwegian child across land and time, with an ever-growing company of sheep, angels, shepherds and wise men, to reach Bethlehem. But, as you would expect from the author of *Sophie's World*, it builds up into much more. In each story there is an aside or an observation which lodges in the mind like a mantra and will make parents as well as children think.

The first slow yell for you as you lay
asleep in the morning on Christmas Day
O do not snore please get out of bed
It's seven o'clock and I haven't been fed
O Yell O Yell O Yell O Yell
Feed me at once or I'll make your life hell

(Christmas Carols for Cats)

Elisabet looked up at the starry sky. She
had to tilt her head far back to see the
big star which was shining so brightly. Again
she heard the cry of a child from inside the
cave. So she went into the stable.

(The Christmas Mystery by Jostein Gaarder)



They dined on mince and slices of
quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand
They danced by the light of the moon.
The moon,
The moon,
They danced by the light of the moon.
(Nonsense Songs by Edward Lear)

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Sally Williams rounds up attention-grabbing titles for the under-fives

In *Molly's Hair* by Emma Daron (Tango, £8.99), Molly hates her hair. It frizzes, whirles, curls and is orange. Smooth-haired Arthur and blonde-bobbed Doris chase her around the playground and call her "carrot". She plait it, combs it and wears big hats, but nothing works. Until her teacher decides that in this year's school play, Molly won't have to be the maggoty old apple tree, again. She will be the angel. On the night, Molly's "butter-scotch swirly, tangerine twirly, special, different, orange hair" lights up the sky. Gentle cartoon-like illustrations and touch-and-feel hair make this an uplifting tale – and not just for red-heads.

Hidden on each page of *Can You Spot the Spotty Dog?* by John Rowe (Hutchinson, £9.99) are animals to spot: a hungry hippo ingeniously camouflaged as a stone; a prickly hedgehog concealed among conker cases; a little white owl, and so on. The illustrations are strong and handsome, the language rhythmic and it's good to see an "interactive" book which doesn't fall back on flaps to flip. The only flaw is the blurb. Dubbing it a "picture puzzle book" leads you to expect, not the sophisticated fare it is, but dot-to-dot.

Fishy Things by Rod Campbell (Macmillan, £2.99) is part of a "Scary Touch and Feelies" series (other titles: *Flying Things*, *Creepy Things*, *Scary Things*). This board book has a "grabby" octopus, hungry shark and hairy starfish (are starfish hairy?) to tug and touch, stroke and feel. Bold illustrations and industrial-strength pop-ups will keep the pages turned as well as phobias fuelled.

When it comes to the big issues in a child's life – bottoms, farts and pooh – you can count on Babette Cole to deal them direct. *Drop Dead* (Cape, £9.99) or "how we grow from one-year-old bald wrinkles into eighty-year-old bald wrinkles" is no exception. With characteristic mischief and irreverence (Gran and Gramps are actually pictured stone-cold flat-out – well, their feet are, anyway), Cole rattles through life, death and even the hereafter (the deceased duo are reincarnated as two scrawny chickens). Children will appreciate Cole's matter-of-factness; grandparents, probably less so.

John Birmingham's *Cloudland* (Cape, £9.99) is not another book about death despite the fact that little Arthur trips and falls off the side of a mountain. Rather, this imaginative story confirms what you always suspected: that the skies are full of people and they are all having a fantastic time. Along with the Cloud Children who save Arthur by saying some magic words to make him light and floaty, Arthur bounces on cumulus clouds, swims in rain clouds, slides in the slipstream of a jet and has tea with the Man in the Moon. Innovative art work, cut-outs and montage add to this inventive and dreamy tale.

A rural idyll, a know-it-all older sister and the genesis of snowfall form the background to the poetic winter story in *The Snow Whale* by Caroline Pitcher, with illustrations by Jackie Morris (Frances Lincoln, £9.99). Laurie and Leo wake one November morning to find the hills "hump-backed" with snow. They build a snow whale as "high as a church, round as a cloud, white as an ice-floe" and spend the next day sailing the Seven Seas on its back. The whale melts, Laurie cries, but both she and Leo are comforted by blazing fires, lashings of hot-buttered toast and tea, and by the knowledge that the snow whale has gone "home", back to the sea.

In *Mrs Pig Gets Cross* by Mary Rayner (Macmillan, £6.99), Mr Pig grumbles "Why can't you make the children clear up after themselves?" after coming home from a hard

day at the office to find the house a tip and Mrs Pig on strike, trousers-up, flicking through a copy of *Pique*. Mr and Mrs bicker and argue and eventually go to bed in such a bait they forget to lock the front door. A fox-looking burglar sneaks in, but trips over the clutter and is forced to leave empty-handed. This is an amusing domestic story, despite the last minute rush to ensure the "important message" promised by the blurb is the right one. "In case you are thinking", writes the panic-stricken Rayner, "that this story means you should never put your things away. It does not. It says be careful not to make your mother and father so cross that they forget to bolt the door." Shame Mr Chauvinist Pig wasn't put straight too.

Christmas Carols for Cats by June and John Hope, illustrated by Sue Helland (Bantam, £5.99) is a small book for a seemingly small audience. If the Christmas market is a niche, this must be the stuff of nooks and crannies. *Christmas Carols for Cats* is in fact surprisingly amusing. Jolly Aristocrat-types illustrate such carol classics as "Collar Bells": "Collar bells, collar bells/Scare the birds away/O, I hate this stupid thing/It's with me night and day".

Edward Lear's Nonsense Songs, illustrated by Bee Wiley (Orion, £9.99), has "The Owl and the Pussycat", yes, but also "The Jumbies", "The Pobble Who Has No Toes", "The Quangle Wangle's Hat". The beautifully rich illustrations feature ink-blue skies, crimson cats, golden grouches, blue baboons; there's silky-smooth paper, magic and mystery. Irresistible.

The First Christmas by Georgie Adams with illustrations by Anna C Leplar (Orion, £8.99) has no baubles, fold-out grottos, baco-foil stars or jingles. This story of the Nativity gets back to basics: donkey, Joseph bearded with nightshirt and open-toed sandals; Mary chubby and smiling sweetly; wise men; stars. Simple words, simple pictures and a refreshingly gimmick-free approach. How will times cope?

If I Didn't Have Elbows by Sandi Toksvig, illustrated by David Melling (DeAgostini Books, £6.99), is subtitled the "alternative body book" and not just because of its stand on body hair ("some people are funny about hair – they say hairy legs are OK for men but think women should shave theirs"). This get-to-know-your-body book aims to explain how the body works by explaining what would happen if it didn't. "If I didn't have skin...I'd have to wear plasters all over"; "If I didn't have a tummy button...I'd have been hatched out of an egg". The idea is inspired, the book packed with facts and Toksvig's humour quirky and engaging. Which is more than can be said for the illustrations: Melling's fondness for biscuit brown and bilious green bring to mind Health Education Authority leaflets and similar off-colour publications. This is a shame, because Toksvig deserves better.

Enchantment in the Garden by Shirley Hughes (Bodley Head, £9.99) is set in Italy, where Valerie, only child of rich parents, has everything she could possibly ever need, except someone to play with. She befriends a marble statue boy, whispers in his ear and he comes to life. The two are inseparable, until one day Cherubino disappears. Inspired as much by Hughes' recent painting holidays as by her talents as a storyteller, this has huge illustrations of piazzas, balconies, and hot still gardens that sweep across each page. There's nothing wrong with these; or with this enigmatic tale – except that it's not about Hughes' best-known creations: the loveable twosome Alfie and Annie Rose. A hard act to get away from, even in the hills of Italy.

J.P. Williams

techno-terror

Nicholas Tucker finds challenge and complexity in recent teenage fiction

Although the novels of Robert Westall have often been associated with violence or horror, the three published since his death in 1993 have concentrated on young love. *Harvest* and *Falling into Glory* describe bumpy but ultimately fulfilling affairs between a teenager and an older woman. *Blizzard* (Methuen, £11.99), the latest work to appear, consists of two separate stories about first passion between youthful contemporaries. Both are very well done, with each protagonist helplessly caught up in the various unstable combinations of egotism and empathy, independence and dependency, defensiveness and openness that can always make late adolescence such a confusing time.

In the first story, tough Margaret sees off opinionated Ralph, but possibly not for long as both grow older and wiser. In the companion novella, an otherwise irritating 16-year-old finds new strength and understanding as he rescues his saintly girlfriend from exposure. Each story is set in a past when bookish sixth formers still liked nothing better than talking about their favourite literary classics. This element of nostalgia apart, there is an enormous amount in Westall's writing for modern teenage readers.

Anne Fine is a brilliant writer who also sells well, proving that quality can still make it in a children's book market increasingly dominated by formulaic series. *The Tulip Touch* (Harrish Hamilton, £10.99) explores the destructive side possible in close friendships, when a best mate can gradually become an oppressive enemy. Young Natalie watches helplessly as her unpopular but powerful friend Tulip turns into a thief, arsonist and near-murderer. An attempt to disengage provokes Tulip into a final act of destruction, in which Natalie loses her home and Tulip the only place she was ever happy. Natalie still cannot bring herself to condemn her former friend, the product of a cruelly neglectful home, and ends the story feeling guilty and sorry. There are fewer laughs here than normal in Anne Fine's work, but as always plenty to think about.

Theresa Breslin's *Death or Glory Boys* (Methuen, £11.99) also asks troubling questions, this time about the ethics of meeting violence with violence. A dangerous terrorist is on the loose, but Phil and Sarah disagree about how to meet this situation. In response, Sarah joins an Army Cadet Orientation Course while Phil remains resolutely pacifist. Neither gets off lightly in terms of knowing for certain they have made the right choice – a point worth stressing given the current simplistic discussions about teaching morality in schools. When the terrorist is killed just before another bomb is ignited, she turns out to be an adolescent herself. But by this time, credulity is severely stretched: this book is not in the same league as the author's prize-winning *Whispers in the Graveyard*.

Norman Silver's *The Blue Horse* (Faber, £9.99) is a shorter story, but a more powerful one. Describing a boy with a serious facial injury following a road accident, it ends with an appeal for more understanding plus a mention of the charity Changing Faces. Yet this is no wooden morality tale to boost a good cause. Alex is a convincing character, whose possessive mother and escapist father both make his life harder. Jilly Wilkinson's dreamlike fine illustrations give this moving account a valuable extra dimension.

Karen Cushman's *Catherine called Birdy* (Macmillan, £3.99) sets out to make British medieval social history child-friendly as never before. Written in

the form of a journal, it describes the year 1290 in terms of immediately arresting detail: maggots in the meat, fleas, medicine made with the dung of a white dog and meals with swart's neck pudding. But while these details are accurate enough, the journal-keeper – 14-year-old Catherine – is so laid-back in her sulks and perversity she could just as well have appeared as a Beverly Hills teenager in *Clueless*. Disappointing of all types of social snobbery, indignant about arranged marriages, Catherine may be a right-on person, but she is never historically convincing. Readers may still enjoy her various adventures, and especially the possibility of True Love at the end.

A clan meeting in Australia for all the dispersed members of one MacDonald family is a daring plot for any novel, given the plethora of Christian names inevitably involved and the tangled blood-lines that keep cropping up. Despite trying hard with this scenario, Judith O'Neill never quite gets away with it in *Hearings* (Harrish Hamilton, £10.99), a sequel to her more successful *So Far from Sky*. Adolescent Malcolm, flying in from Scotland, soon gets involved in a sub-plot so unbelievable O.J. Simpson himself might hesitate before using it as an alibi. Family secrets have always been one staple of children's fiction, even for readers with cupboard bare of skeletons. But this story is more nightmare than reality: the type of plot an editor should have moved in on at the early draft stage, blue pencil at the ready.

Phillip Pullman can do no wrong these days, and *Clockwork*, or *All Wound Up* (Doubleday, £9.99) can fairly be compared to the gothic fantasies of the greatly missed Leon Garfield. Elegantly produced, with haunting illustrations by Peter Bailey, it is one more version of the Faust legend set in the world of 18th-century German clockmakers capable of producing masterpieces involving moving saints, sinners and Death himself with his scythe and hourglass. An inadequate apprentice makes a deadly pact with a stranger, who provides him with a perfect little metal figure to join all the others circling round the town clock.

For those who might want to read spooky stories this Christmas in front of a flickering fire (or television screen), this story could hardly be better.

Christina Hardymont chooses the best of family listening

Top quality recordings of classic children's books provide wonderfully nostalgic listening for all the family. Pop any of the following into the car cassette on your Christmas travels, and there'll be no fear of road rage or cabin fever. It is also clear that such tapes don't put children off the original books: our local children's bookshop manager tells me that they encourage children to chase up the authors first heard on audio.

At the very heart of the classic children's canon are the legends of King Arthur. There have been few better modern narrators of how knights won their spurs than Roger Lancelyn Green. Chivalric children will thoroughly enjoy Terence Hardiman's mainly reading of Green's *King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table* (Penguin, 3 hrs), a stirring rendering of the great legend, ranging from Arthur's birth at Tintagel and the drawing of the sword Excalibur from the stone anvil to the quest for the holy Grail and the Last Battle at Camelot. Once they are hooked, don't be afraid to move them on to TH White's wonderful *The Sword in the Stone*, or even, if they have an ear for poetry and a taste for high romance, stretch them seriously with Malory's inimitable *Morte d'Arthur*, now available complete and unabridged for only £2 (Wordsworth).

A new and very well translated version of Carlo Collodi's *Pinochio* (CSA, 2hrs 50 mins) is long enough to go well beyond the distorted and oversimplified Disney version of a tale that is to Italy what King Arthur is to England and Heidi to Switzerland: a children's classic with a very special place in the heart of the nation. Martin Jarvis rises with his usual formidable skill to the challenge of conveying its rich and varied cast of fantastical characters.

Meade Faulkner's ripping yarn *Moonfleet* (Penguin, 2hrs 30 mins) is a wonderful story of smuggling and skulduggery set in a real place on the Dorset coast – you can spend Christmas at the great house of Moonfleet, now a hotel, visit the church under which the coffins of the infamous Mohune family jostled in the floods, and ramble along the long cruel shingle beach on which ships were lured to their doom. Kevin Whately is a perfect choice as reader of the first person narrative told by the doughty 15-year-old hero John Trenchard.

Edward Leeson's abridgement of Gulliver's *Travels* (Harper Collins, 3 hrs) makes Jonathan Swift's 1726 satire very accessible to young and old listeners alike. Martin Shaw's substantial, sensible voice is perfect for the robust and resourceful hero Lemuel Gulliver.

When it comes to 20th-century children's classics on audio, Alan Bennett scoops the pool. His *Winnie The Pooh and The House at Pooh Corner* (BBC, 2hrs 30 mins) is not a new release, but every nursery needs it. Unhurried, affectionate and thoughtful, Bennett gives Milne's lucid phrases the unexaggerated delivery they need, bringing out its humour with a tremor of playful poohfulness. Bennett has also recorded Hugh Loftus's *The Story of Dr Dolittle* and Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* for the BBC.

Don't be put off buying *Babe The Sheep-pig* (Cover to Cover, 1hr 50mins) just because you've seen the movie. Stephen Thorne's unabridged reading of Dick King-Smith's well-rounded tale of a dignified and intelligent little piglet who resolves to learn to herd sheep as effectively as his collie foster-mother Fly is compulsive listening. It adds attractive further dimensions to the Hogwart's characters and to Babe, who grows up into a lean, keen Large White pig rather than staying forever winsome.

Martin Jarvis's *Just William* tapes already have a huge and loyal following. The newest release, *Just William at Christmas* (CSA, 2hrs 40mins) will not disappoint them. Its six unabridged and seasonal stories feature William as a pan-

tomime bear, and as a very amateur and totally unabashed burglar, and William and the Outlaws as the carol-singers from hell. Richmal Crompton's hero leaves, as usual, a trail of broken and demoralised adults in his wake.

Finally an audiotape which is much more than a talking book: John Peacock's radio dramatisation of John Masefield's marvellous mystery tale *The Box of Delights* (BBC, 3hrs). It has been filmed, but is even better heard, as no physical performance could do its magic justice. Little Kay Harker is transported across winter and in and out of history, in defence of the powerful Box of Delights against the evil and avaricious onslaught of the devilish Abner Brown and his pack of wolves, human and animal. The excellent cast includes Donald Sinden, Lionel Jeffries, Spike Milligan, and the specially written music by Neil Brand adds to the breathtaking excitement of the production.

Pictures clockwise from top left: Sue Helland's melodious cat from *Christmas Carols for Cats*; Whales playing with their calves at the bottom of the sea in *The Snow Whale*; illustration by Rosemary Wells from *The Christmas Mystery*; a panting obvious Spot from *Can You Spot the Spotty Dog* by John Rowe; Andrew Davidson's bold engraving of Skymaster, the mysterious protector of the eponymous wood in *Godhanger*; the frog arriving at the Crumpetty Tree in *Nonsense Songs* illustrated by Bee Willey; and Babette Cole's "famous crocodile wrestler" gets to grips with his prey by the banks of the Nile in *Drop Dead*.

Loftus was was not a woodland bird. Not more than half a dozen times in all his years had he set foot in Godhanger, whose denseness made him most uneasy the moment he dropped below tree-top level. He was above all a bird of the upper air.

(Godhanger by Dick King-Smith)

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travel & outdoors

Outings.....13
Skiing: the knack
of choosing the
right boots14

Lone star state

Simon Calder
visits Texas

The joke waddling towards me on the ample paunch of a T-shirted Texan was in questionable taste: "Why is it called Tourist Season?" the convex garment read, "if we're not allowed to shoot them?" As a tourist, I couldn't help remembering that when Hollywood producers chose a state to figure in the title of a particularly nasty picture, the result was *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. The anniversary of the assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas had passed a few days earlier. A hailstorm was blasting in from Waco, venue for the violent deaths of a hundred besieged believers. Texas is a big, bad state, right?

Big, certainly - the strange shape, resembling a coyote played flat on Interstate 10, measures 800 miles from north to south and from east to west. Texas occupies more space than France, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland combined.

Bad, too, in the biggest cities. To paraphrase *Apollo XIII*, "Houston, we have a problem with everything from car thefts to murder rates". But in the west of the state, where the place-names testify to Spanish influence, gricf is replaced by good. The T-shirt slogans soften to more amiable statements like "I'm drunk and I can't find my horse".

Sober up, saddle up and head for San Antonio, the spiritual heart of Texas. Here, you discover that the Texan assertion that it is a nation apart is solidly grounded in the state's history. Since the first European incursion, five flags have flown over Texas. The first was Spanish, whose conquistadors extended the frontiers of New Spain far into North America. Power was then wrested by an independent

Mexico, from whom Texas won its freedom in 1836 at the battle of San Jacinto. Texas remained an independent republic beneath a single star for nine years, then became the 28th state in the Union. It sided with the Confederacy in the Civil War, then hoisted the Stars and Stripes once more in defeat.

The moment that defines the Lone Star State, though, is none of these. An abandoned Spanish mission was the location of a battle that still brings a tear to the eye of the hardiest of cowboys.

For 13 days in 1836, a band of 189 "Texas Volunteers" including such adventurers as Davy Crockett and Jim Bowie (he of the knife) were besieged here. The foes: a Mexican army led by the mad, bad dictator Santa Anna, self-styled Napoleon of the West. Finally, on 6 March, the defenders were overwhelmed and slaughtered to a man. When Santa Anna dictated his announcement of a "glorious victory", an aide commented "One more such glorious victory and we are finished". He was right: six weeks later the Mexicans were routed by Texans united by the call: "Remember the Alamo". Today the site is a National Park, a patch of history plumb in the middle of a busy American city. Every day Texans make a pilgrimage to the collection of ramshackle and refurbished ruins, and their silent devotion is a moving sight.

The immediate vicinity of the Alamo compound, where once the Mexican army advanced, is now a swirl of tourists - targeted only by some assertive automobiles. You can give the traffic the slip by descending one of a series of hidden stairways to the River Walk, for a semi-subterranean

amble beside the San Antonio River. You will have to sidestep dozens of pavement cafés, mind, because this is Margaritaville, TX. Life in Texas does not get much more sophisticated than Happy Hour on the River Walk, when the brightish, young-ish things hang out in T-shirts reading "Two beers or not two beers. What was the question?", attributed to one Billy Bob Shakespeare.

Mex meets Tex at Mi Tierra, the biggest and busiest restaurant in town. The mark of a good American eatery is that you have to wait for a table, and last week the line for Sunday lunch was 30 minutes long. A plate of enchilladas, the size of a small state and overcrowded with guacamole, rice and refried beans, weighs in at under \$10 (£6).

Wintertime in Texas, and the cost of living is easy. Price levels in the state are a good few notches lower than elsewhere in America. A room at the second-most historic site in San Antonio, the decliningly grand Menger Hotel, cost me £70 - cheaper than many less-starred establishments elsewhere. And a car, which these days you need even more than a horse, is priced at £40 a day including taxes and the right to drop it off 800 miles away at the far end of the state.

To become a bit-player in Texas: the Road Movie, just head west into the widest of open spaces. Heed the warning, though, of the car rental clerk: stick to the speed limit in the countless small towns that still see visiting motorists as a source of municipal revenue. Speeding fines, it is said, help to fund welcome signs like the straw-clutching one in Marfa. It implores visitors to enjoy the town on the grounds

that it is "About the same altitude as Denver, Colorado". I preferred the wry invitation at the entrance to Knippa: "Go ahead and blink - Knippa is bigger than you think" (Oh no it isn't).

Western Texas is not about small-town pride, but big country boasts. An hour out of San Antonio you find pure desert, a landscape with the creased complexion of antiquity. Ragged rocks, spattered with odd spikes of grass and conspiracies of cacti, stretch infinitely on either side of a deserted highway. As the sun begins a slow-motion plummet towards the horizon, the rust-red hue of the terrain accelerates to stark scarlet.

Once darkness descends, shelter in the comfortable anonymity of a motel room and dine in the plainest of roadside restaurants (if you need a drink, just hope you are not in one of the 74 Texan counties that still practice Prohibition). Conserve your strength to tackle the Big Bend National Park.

The Bend in question is a huge turn in the Rio Grande, marking the frontier with Mexico. It loops around the ancient volcanic domain of the Chisos Mountains, which climb high enough to coax some moisture from the air. So the peaks that rise more than a mile high, like a set of monumentally bad Texan teeth, are clad in pine and aspen. A series of trails radiates from the park headquarters in the huge lava saucer known as the Basin. The most spectacular scramble is to the Window, a deep gash in the rim that threatens to decant the careless hiker on to the rocks a thousand feet below.

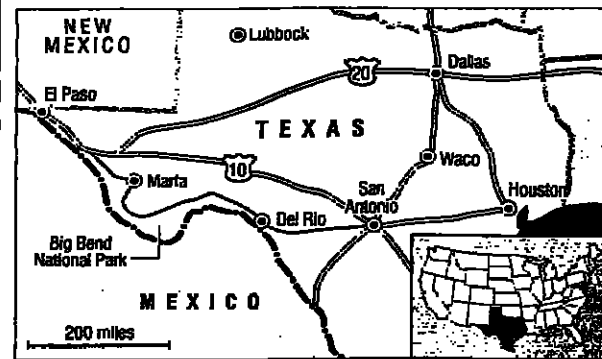
With pleasing predictability, the Window opens out to the west. Suitably wild it looks, too. The human futility of endeavours to harness the desert

is demonstrated 20 miles away in the ghostly ruins of Terlingua. "Population: 25", promises the official state guide, though even that figure looks an exaggeration. This old mercury-mining town has decayed as rapidly as the health of those who sought to scratch a living searching for that elusive quicksilver. Little remains beyond crumbling homes and clouds of dust whistled up by the west wind.

Country music radio stations that seem more plentiful than people hereabouts, and any Texan road journey can only properly be undertaken while listening to one. The River Road snakes like a lasso alongside the Rio Grande, and the AM signal drifts in and out with the uncertainty of the contours. Amid the static, I caught an unashamed serenade to a Stetson by Lyle Lovett: "Never complains and never cries," croons the singer. "You can have my girl but don't touch my hat."

Just before the DJ cued into "If you want to keep your beer cold, put it next to my ex-wife's heart", he told me my watch was an hour out. This state is so big that it straddles two time zones. Eventually, though, even Texas runs out. The mileometer clicked past 800, and the glass and steel of El Paso climbed out of the desert. As I climbed out of the car, the car rental clerk (perhaps the cousin of the one in San Antonio?) offered some advice about onward travel. Go over the border to Mexico, he advised: "Just across the bridge. That's where it all happens". He was wrong: the American automobile adventure happens out along the highway from San Antonio - where the Texan nation, and the joke T-shirts, began.

Texas survival guide



Getting there: Gatwick is Britain's gateway to Texas. American Airlines flies from there to Dallas, Continental to Houston, and British Airways to both. Simon Calder paid £354 for a flight on American Airlines via Dallas to San Antonio, through Quest Worldwide (0181-546 6000).

Getting around: he paid Advantage Rent-a-Car (001 800 777 5500) \$59 plus 10 per cent state tax per day for a small car with unlimited mileage and no drop-off charge. Note that under Texas state law, the purchase of Collision Damage Waiver insurance is not essential.

Getting sleep: he stayed at the following places (the rates paid for a double room are all inclusive of tax): Menger Hotel in San Antonio, 001

512 223 4361, £70; Del Rio Motor Lodge in Del Rio, 001 210 775 2486, £17; Holiday Capri Inn in Marfa, 001 915 729 4326, £22.

Getting advice: the Texas Department of Transportation publishes an excellent free *State Travel Guide* and accompanying *Official Travel Map*. You can obtain these in advance from the Texas representative in London, First PR on 0171-978 5233; or order them from PO Box 5064, Austin, TX; or pick them up on arrival.

Oh yes there is... a Texan pantomime, *Aladdin Texas*, presented at 7.30pm tonight by the Stagefright Theatre Company. Venue: Mandela Theatre, Longford Street, London NW1. Admission, £5, goes to the London Lighthouse.

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Andrew Vincent circled the US in other people's automobiles

! Each city has a number of agents who connect the owner with a prospective driver. And, fortunately, the British traveller is a well-regarded candidate. In the US, look in the *Yellow Pages* under "Auto Transporters and Drive-away Companies". Call up and find out if there's anything going your way.



If you plan ahead, you can have cars waiting for you after each delivery. We had three vehicles lined up, enabling us to complete a full circle from Wash-

You're expected to cover 300 to 400 miles a day, so Washington DC to San Francisco is about 10 days. You have to deliver the car by 3pm on the scheduled day of delivery. The Driveway company will tell you the number of miles you're expected to cover by the shortest route — and add extra to allow for minor detours, getting lost, etc. So for Washington DC to San Francisco you'll get 600 extra miles. The conditions state you'll be charged 25 cents for every extra mile over your limit but no one's ever checked the mileage of any car I've delivered — a couple of which were taken on serious sight-seeing trips! Their main concern is that it's delivered on time.

Privately owned cars tend to be older and less sound, but you get a much warmer reception from the owner who's glad to have his or her wheels back after months of using public transport. They'll often just sign for

Andrew Vinci paid £309 return for a BA flight from Heathrow to Washington. He booked his cars through the Arlington office (near Washington) of Auto American Driveaway: 001 703 524 7300.

something
to declare

Traffic trouble spots

Minneapolis: Interstate 35 West at Minnehaha Creek - 100,000 vehicles into three lanes.

A likely story

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Will bring out-of-state visitors here - *Julie S Burnes, Texas.*
I like the helicopter - *Maureen Ryan, El Paso.*
I like the boat - *Gaby Fuentes, El Paso.*
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'I liked the snake jewellery'

Catherine Stebbings visits Birmingham's Jewellery quarter



Hands-on experience for Jessica Hayes

Photograph: News Team

Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter has been a hive of activity for over 200 years and is still a living community of crafts people, manufacturers and retailers. St Paul's church and square and the neighbouring streets were built in the late 1770s. Silversmiths and goldsmiths moved there, as well as the "toy makers" who made fancy buckles, trinkets and small boxes. They pooled their skills to produce the best designs, workmanship and materials.

By 1913 almost 70,000 people worked in the jewellery trade. It is still an area of grand houses and artisan's terraces. An open cemetery is crisscrossed with the graves of jewellers and an intriguing clock stands at the end of Vyse St, commemorating local MP Joseph Chamberlain.

In the 1970s manufacturers opened their doors to the public, encouraging retailers to open shops here. This is the place to sell your bullion, but there is nothing fake here – it is Birmingham's business and a big one. Ring makers, chain makers, bracelet makers join forces to produce all you could dream of. You will also find the School for Jewellers and Silversmiths (run by the University of Central England in Birmingham), over 100 jewellery shops, and many more workshops. Even the Assay office is just around the corner on Newhall St.

The Jewellery Quarter Discovery Centre occupies the restored premises of Smith and Pepper. The company was first registered in 1899 and ceased trading in 1981 when there were no heirs to continue the business. It is a fascinating insight into a working factory, the techniques used and the grim conditions in which they worked to produce such sparkling results.

Everything from ledgers to shoes covered in gold dust has been preserved.

Over 7000 steel dies silently line the walls of the single storey factory out in the garden, never to be used again. This may seem dead history but just up the road hundreds of jewellers work at their windows using much of the same technology.

The visitors

Rosie Hayes, teacher, took her two daughters Sarah, 14 and Jessica, 10.

Rosie: My husband was raised in Birmingham so I wanted to introduce the children to the area as somewhere their grandparents had visited and enjoyed for years. Their grandfather lived in the St Paul's Club in the Jewellery Quarter for much of his life. We all enjoyed looking round the jewellery shops seeking out rows of pearls, gold chains of every conceivable design and comparing the price tags. This definitely gave us a feel for the area.

The museum was nicely presented. A good, short video introduced the jeweller's raw materials of gold, silver, platinum, diamonds and coloured gemstones, describing how they are mined and prepared for use. A display of jewellery and a sign indicating where it had been worn from ears to navel brought it down to a personal level and we became part of centuries of jewellery wearing people.

The guided tour concentrated on the family business, the employees and the manufacturing process. I liked the way the factory retained its atmosphere, still smelling of oil; dark and dingy, lit solely by rows of old angle-poise lamps and a grimy window. It was poky, crammed with thousands of dies and huge industrial machinery.

There was a chance for the children to get a feel for the manufacturing process which is important in an age where everything from food to jewellery is instantly available in huge variety and quantity from a local shop. It would have been easier to take in if we could have tried our hand at using the simple drill to make a hole through the metal, pulling the copper wire through the wire lengthener or even matching a cast to a die.

Sarah: I found the Jewellery Quarter really interesting with all those tiny shops selling old and new jewellery, a variety of people buying and selling, and a lot of money changing hands. I saw one lady hand over a huge wad of notes – I have never seen so many in my life.

At the Discovery Centre it was nice to see the only place where they did all the manufacturing under one roof, from sheet metal to finished process. I don't think I would wear the bamboo bracelets Smith and Pepper made but I liked their snake jewellery.

I can't imagine working in the factory for 60 years as some of the jewellers did. They only worked on a single part of the designs, the same part every day. The round benches were very cramped and the windows kept closed to stop the small burners going out or the gold dust flying outside.

The jeweller who was demonstrating there was very interesting. I would love to master the circular breathing he showed us. He breathed in through his nose and out through his mouth at the same time while working with his blowpipe.

We did have a big group on our tour but then it gave me an idea of just how cramped working conditions were. A

nice lady guide had actually worked there and told us what it was like, how the place worked and how the staff were managed. She showed us her name in the wages book and was apparently paid very well.

Jessica: I preferred the upstairs part of the museum most; the videos and displays were good. I liked the offices with the old telephones, notes, bills, pieces of paper, packing boxes and a calculator that looked very strange. I liked hearing about the people who worked here and what they did. I would have been happier working here than in the grimy factory downstairs.

You needed a tour to see what it was like, how it felt and how they made all the different jewellery, but it was over an hour which was a bit long.

Apparently it doesn't normally last that long. The man working at the bench was good, but I like places with more activities for children. I would have liked to cut some metal, make a ring or just touch something. When we had our photo taken we did get to sit at a bench and feel what it was like.

I loved the shops in the Jewellery Quarter. I bought a pair of solid gold earrings for only £5 which was great. Later we spotted a similar die in the Discovery Centre.

The Deal

Birmingham Jewellery Quarter Discovery Centre, 77-79 Vyse Street, Hockley, Birmingham (0121-554 3598). Entrance through the shop. The Jewellery Quarter is signed from the city centre for pedestrians and traffic, and served by trains and buses 16, 16A, 70, 74, 78, 79, 91, 46 and 101.

Access: Meter parking and multi-storey Pay and Display (2 hours) on Vyse St. Free parking (2 hours) on most adjoining streets.

Disabled-access: Opening Times: All year Monday-Friday 10am-4pm.

Saturday 11am-5pm, Closed Sunday. Admission: Adults, £2; Children and OAP's, £1.50; Family tickets, £5.

Food: The Discovery Centre has an excellent café, better than most local sandwich bars for snacks, cappuccino and cake etc. Filled baguettes, £1.50. Open 10am-4pm, weekdays; 11am-5pm, Sats. The area has a number of traditional greasy spoon cafés like the Hylton Café, 2 Hylton St. Sausage, egg, chips and peas for £2.15; open 6.30am-2.30pm; 7.30am-2.30pm, Sats. The best pub is The Rope Walk, St George's Square for good hot meals, light snacks and Banks's beer. There is also a street vendor selling filled jacket potatoes, £1.50, on Vyse St.

Shopping: Around 100 jewellery shops offer classic engagement rings, bracelets, chains, signet rings, watches etc. Smaller studios take one-off commissions. Sculptors, stained-glass designers, graphic artists and furniture makers also have studios. The Discovery Centre Shop has good contemporary jewellery and local crafts – including work by Kathryn Willis, Ruth Martin, Jane Adams and Pamela Rawnsley.

Events: Temporary exhibitions of local craftspeople in the Discovery Centre Café. Craft Sale, Discovery Centre Café, 7 and 8 December – offering unique ideas for Christmas shoppers.

Toilets: Excellent facilities in the Discovery Centre including baby changing and feeding room. Public toilets on Vyse St for shoppers.

Are we nearly there?

A weekly round-up of events for children

Get in a Christmassy mood by seeing one of the many specially devised seasonal shows for children already running at theatres around the country.

Pinnocchio

Anthony Clark, director of this year's glorious *Red Balloon* rounds up the same team for a new musical version of Pinnocchio. Beautifully designed, with an original score by Mark Vibrams. Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Broad St, Birmingham (0121-236 4455), Mon 9 to 25 Jan. Matinee Mon 2pm. Family £24-£48; children, £7-£15.

Beauty and the Beast

This in-the-round production creates two worlds: Beauty's sumptuous environment of 18th-century France and an unknown world of dreams, nightmares and adventure. This other world is dominated by the Beast, whose servants are marionettes and automata.

The Young Vic, The Cut, London SE1 (0171-928 6363). Today, 2.30pm and 7pm. Adults £14; children, £7.50.

Peter Pan

Fey fairies meet swashbuckling pirates and reptilian time bombs in Barry's classic tale of a little boy who never grows up. West Yorkshire Playhouse, Quarry Hill, Leeds (0113-244 2111). Adults, £9.50-£17; children, £7-£14; family £40.

The Amazing Tale of Good King Wenceslas

For something more exciting than the traditional pantomime, take your children along to this new, witty musical with an exotic Czech flavour. The tale opens in Bohemia and features good King Wenceslas, cruel regent Olga and Knot the Dragon. Suitable for the over fives. Warwick Arts Centre, University of Warwick Coventry (01203-524524). Family, £27; children, £5.50. Until 11 Jan, various times. Today, 2pm and 5.30pm.

The Secret Garden

Orphan Mary Lennox goes to live in the forbidding Misselthwaite Manor, where she discovers the key to a magical secret garden. David Thomas (whose *Railway Children* featured a life-size steam engine) has designed this classic piece of Christmas Victorian for the stage, so some rather special effects are promised. Wolsey Theatre, Civic Drive Ipswich, Suffolk (01473-253725) from Tue 10 to 18 Jan. Weekdays, 2pm and 7pm; Saturdays 4pm and 7.30pm. Adult, £9.50-£13.50; children, £7.50-£11.50, family £46.

The BFG

There's brainboggling sights ad whoopee splunkers galore at the Sherman Theatre in Cardiff this Christmas, where guest director Michael Bogdanov directs Roald Dahl's much-loved story of a *Big Friendly Giant*, who would rather blow dreams into the bedrooms of little children than the time-honoured giant antics of devouring "chidldren" and human beans.

Sherman Theatre, Cardiff (01222 230 451) to 11 Jan. Adults, £6-£10; children, £6-£8. Various times. Today 2pm and 7pm.

The Wizard of Oz

Get little heels clicking with a trip to Glasgow Citizens, where Dorothy and Toto are taking a trip over the rainbow to the land of Oz. This family musical includes all the old favourites such as "Follow the Yellow Brick Road". The Citizens Theatre, 119 Gorbals St, Glasgow (0141-429 0922) to 18 Jan. Adults, £5-£10; children, £2.50-£5; family £25. Weekdays, 2pm and 7pm. Today 2pm, 5pm and 8pm.

Liese Spencer

The sleepy pleasures of Lullingstone

by Elizabeth Wine

The Kentish countryside enveloping the intriguing Lullingstone Roman Villa and two castles – one in ruins and another in better repair – is not vast; in fact, it barely qualifies as "the country" as it is bordered by the small town of Eynsford. But this does not stop it from being relentlessly rural, sleepy and lush.

From the railway station, a leisurely ten-minute stroll up the main street of Eynsford will bring you to a ford with an old Norman bridge so small and charming you'd swear it was specially commissioned by the post-card industry. Legend has it that John Wesley used the bridge as an open air pulpit.

Across from the town church the bridge slopes up and over a very narrow part of the River Darent; conditions permitting, you should be able to walk or drive across the stream because it is usually under a foot deep. On the other side The Plough pub awaits.

Here you can sit in front of the old fireplace, under rafters crammed with old rusty farming implements and ponder the romantic medieval past of this slice of Kent. With whisky in hand, let your eyes roam over the walls rife with old or faux-old wooden signs pointing out such

facts as the name of the first recorded vicar of the parish church of St Martin's. The walls proclaim it to be Robert de Farnen, appointed in 1286, just so you know for your next cocktail party. You will also learn that by the time the Domesday survey was made in 1086, Eynsford was a "thriving manor."

Along the road, following the graceful swell over the (surprisingly) still-green fields. You will pass several private residences and the Home Farm with a few cattle grazing in the pastures. Shortly you will see the graceful old viaduct serving double duty now as railroad track. Pass under that and you will come up to a rather ugly plastic edifice sheltering one of the best-preserved Roman villa ruins in England, Lullingstone.

Among the highlights of the villa are sublime mosaic pavements, fine enough to set the heart of any classical enthusiast aflutter, and a floor-plan of the home that whispers a picture of life in Roman Britain from AD 75 to AD 420. The crumbled ledges of the walls that separated luxurious bathing chambers are especially intriguing. Bathing was a very important part of Roman life, and the villa had several rooms set aside for this luxuriant ritual: a fuel store,

a furnace, hot room, hot dry room, hot-water bath, tepid room, cold room, water tank, recreation room and large cold plunge bath. The occupants, thought to be well-off farmers, could have sweated, bathed and been rubbed with oils by their slaves for hours on end every day in these rooms.

Archaeologists speculate that the site has been home to several wealthy families through the centuries and even housed one of the earliest Christian shrines in Britain. It has been a trove of finds, including two marble busts (now in the British Museum), more than 400 coins, pottery and fragments of Christian wall paintings.

Further along the path, after more lovely fields dappled with cattle, a castle complex, including a church, gatehouse and yard, spreads out on your left.

Lullingstone Castle is unfortunately not open in the winter, but just inside the imposing 15th-century gate tower, tiny St Botolph's church is open. The chapel holds hour-long services every Sunday at 11.00. The medieval church – which holds the tombs of the Har-Dyke family – is an architectural contrast to the castle itself which was originally of Tudor design and remodelled in the Queen Anne period. The yard, which looks out onto a tranquil private

lake, came to be used as a tilt-yard especially to showcase the prowess of Henry VII's champion joustier, Sir John Peche. The atmosphere of the place was conducive to games – the rules of lawn tennis were first concocted here in 1873.

A footpath continues past the castle gateway, with the River Darent on the left, on to the Lullingstone visitor's centre. From there, Lullingstone park can be discovered.

The ruins of Eynsford Castle are worth coming back into Eynsford for. Open at all times, the old walls look out over more green fields and hold the dramatic story of William de Eynsford, courtier to King Henry II and one of the catalysts for the famous quarrel between the king and Thomas a Becket.

Nowadays, the locals use the castle as the backdrop for an impressive fireworks display around Guy Fawkes season. The fireworks are viewed from around a large bonfire in a farmer's field adjoining the castle, separated from the ruins by the river. Reserve time on the trek up the main road of Eynsford to the station for a stop in the Malt Shovel, another fine Eynsford pub, specialising in seafood. It is spoken of highly by the locals and well worth making time for.

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The perfect pair

Stephen Wood
in search of the
ultimate ski boot

My feet are ugly, misshapen things. I wouldn't normally mention this; I do so now only because it explains my painful relationships with ski boots. It's always the same: what starts as a firm embrace becomes a tight squeeze, then degenerates into a pinching, chafing squabble. Attempts at mediation – relaxing the forefoot adjuster, a compromise with the heel retention unit, are useless. By mid-afternoon the boots have turned mean, all take and no give.

I resolved to start this season in the right boots. I would find the country's finest boot-fitter, probably a horny-handed artisan called Hans at a small workshop in Clerkenwell – and he would cobble together a pair which had at least something in common with my feet. But none of the equipment experts I consulted knew a Hans. Further disappointment followed: their choice of where I should get my boots was about as intriguing as Marco Pierre White recommending Marks & Spencer as the place to go for good sandwiches. They suggested Snow+Rock.

"You've got a wide foot with a big first metatarsal, there's pronation, your second ankle's very prominent, your arches are collapsed and the heel is very, very narrow behind the Achilles," said Rob Hickling, equipment department manager at Snow+Rock's Holborn branch. That's what you get for consulting experts: I knew my feet were bad, but I didn't know they were that bad.

Hickling, however, stayed calm. He stared at my feet. "We have to reiterate the foundations of the feet," he pronounced, and gave my right ankle a twist. "That's the shape to which I'll be fitting the



These boots were made for skiing: "I can't put them into a boot just because they like the look of it"

boot: the foot's straight, the instep is higher, everything is aligned – you'll be able to flat-ski, and exert more pressure when you push forward. And you won't roll around inside the boot."

I knew that Snow+Rock means business from its catalogue: the boots come with a "comfort guarantee". Ski boots have previously guaranteed me discomfort, but Snow+Rock was prepared to change or re-fit boots before use "if any problems develop" (which explains why, for the first time, I am writing my column in ski boots), and even re-fit them, still free of charge, after use. To offer that guarantee, Snow+Rock has to be confident of its fitting service – so the process usually takes an hour and a half.

Rob Hickling knows his boots inside as well as out (and says, surprisingly, that the greatest variation between their shells lies in the fit around the ankle and heel). Having got to know my feet, he chose the Nordica GP07 for me because it was the closest to their shape, and because he gathered that I would gladly give up some performance for com-

fort. (Low-compromise skiers, of course, go for tighter-fitting, performance boots with expensive custom-moulded liners.) He heaved out the entire liner, I put the GP07s on, and he peered inside the shell with a torch. "If you don't take the liner out and look down the shell, how the hell are you going to know what's going on inside? That's what sets a good boot-fitter apart from a bad one," he said.

The old rear-entry boots that gave me such pain – "buckets" Hickling calls them – were packed with seductive padding, but could be adjusted to exert pressure on only three sensitive points, the forefoot, heel and calf. The newer, clipped boots are designed to grip the whole foot more closely, with thinner liners – which makes a good fit all-important. So the GP07s, which passed the torchlight test around the heel, would be widened by heating and stretching the shell to accommodate my big first metatarsal (a bunion, to you and me); and a rigid, custom-made insole support called a "foot-bed" would be fitted to raise my arches and align the feet, countering pronation (the

rolling inwards of heel and ankle) and reducing the prominence of the second ankle (a knobby bit that sticks out below the inside of the ankle).

Correcting my foot faults seemed complex, but the major problems Rob Hickling has with customers are more straightforward. "The biggest is having to get across to them that I can't put them into a boot just because they like the look of it – I have to put them into one that is the shape of their foot. Similarly, customers have often read a magazine article in which a journalist has skied in a pair of boots that fitted him really well and given them a great write-up and I have to say 'They're not going to work on your feet.' The other major problem is persuading customers to buy boots they think are too small: 'Big boots that feel good in the shop won't feel good on the slopes.'"

I was persuaded, even though I could feel the end of my boots with my toes. (Hickling corrected me: "You can feel the liners.") He stood me up on a machine fitted with what felt like two plastic

bags full of soft clay: they took an impression of my feet, which were used as moulds for the footbed – which, in my (extreme) case, had to be reinforced with "stabiliser blocks". Then I joined the other customers standing about waiting for their boots to hurt. Mine didn't; so, three hours after entering the shop, I bought them. The boots cost £200, the foot-bed package £56.

They have stayed comfortable for the time it takes to write 1,000 words: not quite carpet slippers, but OK. I was very impressed with the boot-fitting, but Rob Hickling knew I was a journalist – taking notes is a dead give-away. I thought I should get a second opinion. Sneaking a look at the shop's job cards, I got Philip Halliday's name and number: he had had foot-beds and custom-moulded liners made for his own boots, bought – as he told me – in a ski resort. What did he think of the Snow+Rock service? "Excellent," said Halliday, who is 36 years old and works for a merchant bank. "They did a superb job."

What kind of boots do you need?

Beginners, and experienced but unadventurous skiers, should buy boots that are light, flexible, comfortable and cheap. Expect to pay about £150. Only if you are well built – and therefore naturally exert more downward pressure – should you be tempted to go for intermediate boots.

Intermediates who ski moderately well on difficult pistes should choose boots with a stiffer shell and lining. They will fit tighter, and enable a good, strong skier to get more response. Intermediate boots also offer more adjustments for canting and flexing. Expect to pay from £190.

Experts ski aggressively and at high speed, so they need a very stiff, racing boot. These are unforgiving, and often require custom-made liners and foot-beds for a perfect fit. Expect to pay £270-plus for the boots, and £425 or more with the custom-fit package.

PHOTOGRAPH: DILLON BRYDEN

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La Plagne: "There's no doubt that France is the best country for skiing novices and children"

PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY WARD

Listening to the call of the pistes

A cheaper franc, well-run resorts and some fantastic family offers are luring skiers back to the French Alps, writes Richard Holledge

Here's a confession. I like Les Menuires; that monstrosity of a ski resort - all concrete and car parks - which straddles the busy road from Les Moutiers in the Val d'Isère to the less abrasive charms of Val Thorens.

The resort sums up so much of the good, bad and ugly of French skiing. Its runs are among the most interesting and the most difficult in the Trois Vallées - the vast ski region that has 200 lifts and 600 kilometres of prepared pistes. Surprisingly it also has the jolliest and most picturesque of the area's mountain cafés.

Les Menuires also has some of the worst architecture ever to be perpetrated on a public whose vision of a ski resort usually owes so much to the chintz and chic of Switzerland; this resort is matched in starkness only by the vast tenement block of La

Plagne's Aime 2000 and, of course, the hectic high-rise blocks of Tignes.

But, then, the French decided years ago that mountains were there to be walked on, climbed on, and skied on and that they would open up the maximum amount of mountain for as many people as possible to use with the minimum of effort. Hence apartment blocks with rooms so small that they would make a battery hen feel stressed, and great swathes of motorway skiing that make even the most ungainly feel as if they are a second Jean-Claude Killy - even if they don't actually ski like one.

There's no doubt that France is the best country for skiing novices and for children. Many of the resorts are built directly on the slopes so that you do not have that wearying tramp to the lifts, slip-sliding under the awkward weight of skis. They also

have runs and lifts that neatly interlink. What's more, I've always found that the French resorts cater extremely well for families. Every resort has a kindergarten, often offering ski-instruction that is specially geared to the future champions in their charge. Mum and dad can ski all day without being held back, and return from the pistes glowing with health and *vin chaud* ready to be loving and attentive parents.

If you book a package holiday with an apartment included in the price, it is one way of economising on extras - although most holiday-makers now spend a fortune in the burger joints so loved by the French skier of the Nineties, or in the resort supermarkets where the prices are astronomical.

Many of the larger French resorts are located at such high altitudes, it is rare that they suffer

from the snowlessness of Austria.

This year, the French - no doubt challenged by the fact the British like to seal themselves hermetically in their chalets away from all the foreigners - have launched a determined billboard campaign. Posters boast proudly: "Shock new findings suggest French are wonderful people."

But more important to the French ski industry than a desire to be loved is its need to compete with Italy, which has had two seasons blessed with marvellous snow and a generous exchange rate, and with North America. Both the US and Canada invariably have good snow not to mention the fabled powder. They also combine their "have-a-nice-day" philosophy with efficient lifts, few queues, imaginative lessons and unfailing charm.

The French ski industry's latest advertising may not be enough to overcome any latent Francophobia, so it has incorporated in its campaign a terrific offer for families skiing in France in January. The Rhône-Alpes area, which includes resorts such as Alpe d'Huez, Chamonix, Courchevel, La Plagne and Val d'Isère, is giving away free accommodation, ski-pass, ski-school and gear for seven days. Many British operators have come in on the scheme, although not all the brochures were printed in time to publicise the fact.

Add to this offer an improvement in the exchange rate - some observers think the franc might even hit the dizzy heights of 10 to the pound - and it seems hard to imagine why anyone would ski anywhere else in the New Year.

But there's a but. It seems that France's very efficiency at running its ski resorts somehow counts against it. You sometimes crave the idiosyncrasies of Badgastein in Austria with its thermal baths or even Kitzbühel with its antiquated lift system. You long for the moonlit charm of Mürren or the erratic snow levels of Champéry in Switzerland or anywhere in the Dolomites.

But France has its quirky corners, too. As you head towards Val d'Isère, look across the valley to your right and you will see the little huddle of houses and the spire that belongs to Villard. Two bars, two cafés and a couple of chalets, and that's your lot. The joy of the place is that you can take a 10-minute chair-lift ride and ski directly into mighty Les Arcs.

And since I am so perversely fond of Les Menuires, one can make the most of its skiing and indeed the whole of the Trois Vallées by staying further down the valley at St Martin de Belleville. The locals make their own cheese there: it feels like a proper village with some pleasant hotels and a decent restaurant or two.

In fact, in the pursuit of quiet corners, it's not a bad idea to buy a decent map or even study the piste maps carefully. That way you might decide to opt for the one-time farming community of Montchavin instead of one of La Plagne's main resorts. Or you could try La Chapelle d'Abondance down the road from Châtel. It boasts the delights of Les Cornettes, one of the finest restaurants in the French Alps. Or while we're on the subject of food, why not stay at Courchevel 1300 instead of the crazily expensive 1850. The lower resort is far prettier and is the home of another excellent Alpine restaurant - Le Bistrot du Pra.

It's possible really to tuck yourself away on the fringes of the Portes du Soleil at the Hotel Les Sapins. It is a small, family-run classic French village hotel, on the edge of Lac Montriond with first-class food and prices ranging from £12 to £25. A *navette* takes the skier to the foot of the slope which connects to the 630-kilometre high mass of slopes. Why stay in flashy rackety Aoraz when you can get a taste of the real thing?

Snow report

Some years ago I emerged spluttering with cold and damp into a raging blizzard above Val d'Isère. It was two weeks before Christmas, the weather was dreadful, the snow was deep. Our hardy troupe of early season skiers were ecstatic. It looked as if a perfect winter's skiing lay ahead.

This year spirits are higher than ever with some of the best early snowfalls for years. In fact the conditions in many resorts are more like February with lifts starting to run weeks earlier than usual. In St Anton the snow is up to 150cm deep, Cervinia is fully operational with 200cm and in Chamonix there's 250 plus at the highest levels and even Andorra boasts between 50 and 100cm.

No wonder Nick Morgan of Le Ski, which has chalets in Courchevel 1650, is rubbing his hands in gleeful anticipation.

"We had the first snow on November 22, since when two metres have fallen," he says. "It's a fantastic base for the season because the snow settles down and is topped up during the rest of the winter. It's also a joy for the ski-shop owners because fewer skis will be broken and fewer edges knackered."

In Courchevel itself, enthusiasts have been using seal skins to clamber to Saulire at the top of the resort and ski the five or six miles to the valley floor.

Roger Dunford, who runs a ski shop in 1650 with his French wife says: "This has been the best start to the season we have had for more than ten years. I was skiing yesterday in powder and glorious sunshine. Pure sex." RH

For a complete list of travel companies taking part in the Kids for Free offer contact the French Tourist Office, 178 Piccadilly, London W1V 0AL (0171-491 7442).

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Fly away breakfast

Last weekend, two consignments of several hundreds of meals, were flown from Chicago to London - then promptly thrown away. British Airways and American Airlines both decided not to feed their passengers before the flights arrived at Heathrow on Thanksgiving Sunday.

The lesser of the issues this even raises is: why did the airlines choose not to serve breakfast? They blame the weather. As is common at this time of year, the flights from the Windy City hit turbulence over the Atlantic. Strong tailwinds cut journey times for eastbound aircraft but increase the "ripple" effect that causes bumps. Cabin crew have to stay strapped in during turbulence. So, say the airlines, there was simply not enough time.

Yet the turbulence affecting the American Airlines plane had ended more than an hour before the Boeing landed at Heathrow. As people who fly between London and Paris will know, British Airways finds it quite possible to feed a Boeing 767 full of people



Simon Calder

during a flight that lasts a mere 30 minutes.

The first that American Airlines' passengers knew of the decision to dispense with breakfast was when the plane arrived; no announcement was made. The carrier says this is because the crew refrain from using the public address system on night flights. But a briefing upon arrival, suggesting places in Heathrow where a decent breakfast might be found, would have been welcome.

Much more importantly, why did the airlines chuck out the meals rather than give them to the genuinely needy, such as London's homeless people? A certain amount of wastage is inevitable with any form of mass catering. But when

pristine consignments of meals are involved, you would hope that there would be some way to use the food to nourish the hungry rather than throwing the stuff away.

American Airlines says that UK customs regulations prohibit this sort of thing, and so food has to be destroyed as soon as it arrives. British Airways says health considerations prevent it distributing meals to the hungry. But given that the average in-flight tray has considerable shelf-life, it seems sad that there is no alternative to incineration.

"Hitch-hiking," says Planet, "is never totally safe, and we don't recommend it".

So instead, why not try a safer activity, such as modifying electrical equipment?

Meandering through Mexico last week with Lonely Planet's *Travel Survival Kit*, I was alarmed to read that travellers intending to use electrical items are advised to "cut/file/bend" the pins on a plug to get it to fit a Mexican socket. Don't try this at home - or in Mexico.

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Is it time to start planting?

The second in Anna Pavord's series on gardening principles

Plants will mostly try to grow, whatever you do to them. Sometimes they will also die, even if you are the world's acknowledged expert on their care. But there is a lot that a gardener can do to help at this time of year. I much prefer planting in the couple of months leading up to Christmas. A plant has such a lot to do in spring. If you plant it in late autumn or early winter, it can concentrate on getting its understorey sorted out before it has to think about pushing out leaves and flowers.

Some plants have quite specific requirements and it is crazy to ignore them. No iris is going to thank you for burying it with a foot's depth of heavy clay on top of its sun-loving rhizomes.

The first principle is: do not plant the pot as well as the contents. There is a certain logic in doing so (plant easier to move if you have made the wrong decision, roots not disturbed, job quicker and simpler to carry out) but this treatment does nothing for the long term future of the plant in question. Roots must run.

The second principle is: dig a hole twice the size of the one you first thought of. The RSPCA would soon be on your doorstep if you crammed your dog into a kennel that only fitted it when it lay with its back legs crooked up to its belly and its head bent round to meet them. Plants too, need space to spread.

A planting hole should be roughly twice the size of the root ball of the plant you are putting into it. When you have dug the hole, mix some compost or bonemeal into the pile of earth you have taken out. I often do this in a bucket. Fork over the base of the hole to loosen the earth. This is particularly necessary in stiff, clay soils. It may not be necessary at all in sandy ones.

Put one hand over the compost in the pot and tip it over to ease out the plant. If it has been sitting too long in a nursery or garden centre, you may need to bang the bottom of the pot sharply with your trowel to start it moving. Sometimes roots poke out through the drainage holes in the bottom of the pot. If the plant won't shift, either cut down the side of the plastic pot to release it, or trim some of the roots protruding from the bottom.

Gently tease out any roots that have been tightly coiled round the inside of the pot – another sign that nurserymen have been lazy about repotting. If you don't do this teasing, plants may never kick the roundabout habit. They will never become properly rooted and will be more at risk of being blown out of their holes in winter or dying of drought in summer.

Settle the plant in the prepared hole, spreading the roots around it like a skirt. If there are not enough roots to spread in all directions (roses are often very sparse in this respect) then make sure that you favour the side which will face the prevailing winds. In this country, this is often the south-west.

Use a cane to check that the soil on

top of the rootball is just level (or perhaps very slightly below) the level of the ground around it. You can adjust the level of course by adding soil to the bottom of the hole or digging it deeper if you didn't go far enough in the first place.

If you are planting a tree, drive your stake in now, while you can still see where it will go, clear of any major roots. Otherwise you risk doing a vampire act and battering the stake through the heart of the rootball. Fill in around the rootball with the soil and compost mixture. I find it easier to pour this in from a bucket, stopping every now and then to press the soil down with my bunched fist.

If you firm around the root ball in stages like this, you can be reasonably sure that there will be no spaces where the roots are waving frantically, unable to make contact with sustaining soil. When you have filled the hole level with the surrounding ground, tread round the infill firmly, but not oppressively.

Water in the plant thoroughly. This means a whole watering can for each plant. No cheating. If you are planting trees, shrubs or moisture-loving perennials, follow up the watering with a thick mulch of muck, well rotted compost, or leaf mould, spreading it in a wide circle round the new plant. If you are lucky, your plant will not need any further tivation, in the way of shaping or pruning. The nursery should have done that for you. (Customers often complain if they buy roses cut down as hard as they ought to be so, reluctantly, many rose growers send out plants with strict instructions to the customer to do the cutting themselves when the rose has been planted.)

On other shrubs – or trees – you may see diseased or damaged stems that will need to be cut back to fresh, healthy growth. Prune these back to a clean cut near an outward facing bud. Sometimes on a tree or shrub there is a branch that is awkwardly angled towards the centre of the head. Take this out, bearing in mind the kind of free, open outline you would like the shrub or tree to have when it is mature. For the same reason, take out any weak, straggling growths entirely, and shorten very long growths that you feel might eventually unbalance the shape of a tree or shrub.

This is not necessarily the best time for all planting. Snowdrops and aconites are best planted "in the green" – in early spring after they have finished flowering, but before they lose their leaves. Bearded irises are also best planted when they have finished flowering – usually in late summer.

I mentioned irises at the beginning. They do best if they are planted with the rhizomes sitting on top of a little saddle of soil, which you can mould in the planting hole. Arrange the rhizome so that the roots drape down either side of the saddle, leaving the rhizome itself sitting mostly on top of the soil. And remember, when you are planting, think dog.



The first exhibition in this country of the bizarre engravings of Francois Huttin opened this week. 'Imaginary Gardens' at London's Francis Kyle Gallery owes all to imagination and nothing to 'Gardener's Question Time'

Vineyard update

By Anna Pavord

Earlier this autumn (*Independent* 12 October) I wrote about Jim Page-Roberts and his Hammer-smith vineyard. Further north in Stoke on Trent, Mark Bloomfield writes to say that he has his greatest success with the Canadian hybrid vine 'Red Brand'. "Of the three wall trained vines here, the oldest, grown from a cutting, is 25 years and in a good year, yields over 40 pounds of grapes."

"The grapes are picked bunch by bunch and we freeze them until we have gathered enough to make a gallon of wine. If kept a number of years, the wine, which can be very acid, matures to a drinkable rose-style. "I have tried 'Gamay Hatif' and 'Sylvana Riesling' but the latter failed totally."

Mary Pera of Colchester wrote about the vine, *Vitis vinifera* 'Fragola', that she grew over a terrace outside her bedroom window just outside Rome. "The rats adored the grapes and at night the scuffling and chirping of dozens of them made life a misery. We had to cut off every bunch to deter them. Perhaps English rats don't have the same tastes, but I for one would not try again."

Stephen Skelton has been growing vines and making wine commercially in the UK for 20 years and also sells vines to other vineyards in the country.

"Although I wholeheartedly agree with your strictures about growing plants without spraying them," he writes, "it is a fact of viticultural life that almost all varieties that make a good wine in the UK are disease susceptible viniferas. In order to get sufficient ripeness and the correct acid/sugar balance, we have to grow a 'soft' variety that does not withstand fungal attack."

Some viniferas, he says, are better than others. 'Schönburger' and 'Reichensteiner' are more resistant than 'Müller-Thurgau' or 'Huxelrebe'. "The exception is the hybrid Seyval Blanc ('Seyve-Villard 5/276') which is almost totally resistant and can produce good wine, albeit in a neutral style."

Mr Skelton considers that most amateur growers make the mistake of leaving far too many buds on their vines after winter pruning. Fruiting shoots (and so eventually the flowers and fruit themselves) are crowded together and do not get the light and air they need. A properly trained vine with sunlight and air on all its shoots is far less likely to succumb to powdery mildew and so won't need spraying. "Once a vine is allowed to become diseased, the problem is made worse as overwintering spores are always present."

For a copy of Stephen Skelton's catalogue of vines send a stamped, addressed envelope to Cornerstone, Appledore Rd, Taverden, Kenilworth TN30 7BE. Tel: 01580 765242.

cuttings

The current issue of *Gardens Illustrated* has a startling cover: a single snowdrop silhouetted against a dark, murky winter background. The snowdrop is the star of this issue's Plant Profile, the feature voted the most popular of all by the magazine's readers. There are features about gardens in New York and Holland as well as a riveting piece by Stephen Wood on the lost gardens of Heligan in Cornwall, saved by the pop entrepreneur Tim Smit. You can give a year's subscription (that's six issues) as a Christmas present by sending £19.50 to *Gardens Illustrated*, Subscriptions Dept, FREEPOST (SW 6096), Bristol BS12 0BR – or telephone an

order on 01454 202515. The Royal Horticultural Society is holding a special Christmas Flower Show next week on Tuesday (11-7, admission £5) and Wednesday (10-5, admission £3). Plants for sale will include cyclamen, azaleas and shrubs suitable for a winter garden. Caroline Alexander from the Hop Shop will be there too. Her stand features a winter hearth, the rug made from carline thistles with grey eucalyptus for the smoke from the fire. She will be selling a wide range of handmade Christmas decorations, including topiary trees. The show will be held at the RHS's New Hall, Greycoat St, Westminster, London SW1.

Thanks to the divine Joanna Trollope, thousands of readers are familiar with the term "Aga saga". Just as the phrase denotes a novel of middle-class country life, so the Aga itself has come to be thought of as an essentially rural type of cooking appliance.

Yet there is another kind of Aga saga, a good deal less entertaining. I refer to the performance which starts when the wretched thing ceases to work.

The stove is normally a miracle of efficiency and reliability, invented – can you believe it? – by a blind Swedish physicist in the 1920s. But our own model has an uncanny sense of occasion, and generally chooses Christmas Eve or Easter Saturday as the moment at which to expire.



Duff Hart-Davis
The great Christmas Aga saga

Last week, however, we foolishly curtailed its own powers of decision by letting it run out of oil.

With the tank replenished, I found we had created an air-lock in the oil line which feeds both Aga

and hot-water boiler. The boiler I managed to clear, but the Aga would not relight properly, and burnt at about a quarter heat, filling the house with an appalling, noxious stink.

Because the firms which service the stoves charge exorbitant fees – £90 for a first call-out, £65 for a routine six-monthly visit, and insist that you have a regular contract – I had done recent servicing myself. There is so little to go wrong that room for manoeuvre is strictly limited: all one can do is scrape out carbon from the bottom of the burner, make sure oil pipes are running freely, renew wicks occasionally and check that the flue is clear.

For once, however, my amateur ministrations failed to do the trick, and after ten attempts I had to admit defeat. Now came the crunch. The firm which had once looked after us did not want to know. "Oh, I see we haven't been to you since 1994," said the sooty telephonist: there was no chance of their sending anyone for at least two weeks – and they took such a high-handed line that we ditched them.

Other companies were also booked up for the next ten days; but in the end we hit on a free-lance operator, Robin, who promised to come in three days' time.

As we waited, I thought back to other Aga sagas. One took place in Tipperary, where the stove, known locally as "di Aga", was much castigated because it would not heat the water. "God," cried Tom, our house-man, "it should put dat feller hoppin'" – the feller being the hot-water tank, which remained resolutely static and luke-warm.

In due course we brought in a plumber, whose name – you must believe me – was Looney. By trying to blow through the pipes with a vacuum-cleaner connected up backwards, he created the

biggest air-lock in history.

Another saga took place in the wilds of Argyllshire, where we rented a fishing lodge. The friends staying with us had four sons, one of whom was at an exceedingly tiresome age. When this odious boy, in the middle of the night, woke up his mother to say he could smell fire, she at first ignored him. But at the fourth arousal she went downstairs and found that the Aga was indeed ablaze.

Big yellow flames were pouring from it, front and top. The wooden cupboard doors opposite were too hot to touch. My niggles with oil-burning Agas – now as then – is that the controls appear to have no effect. Push down the lever to shut off the oil, and what happens? The stove keeps going. Switch off the electric power to the control box, and the result is the same.

The appliance does, after a while, shut down – but on that terrifying night in Scotland I did not know this, and supposed the flaming monster to be on the point of exploding. At least if it does, I told myself, we'll all end up in Loch Eive, in little pieces, and know nothing about what happened.

On that occasion the flames eventually subsided, and we went back to bed. Last week, the excellent Robin eventually arrived, and went through the rituals which I had performed, but more thoroughly, and with a loving touch imparted by 40 years of experience. When he lit up, away went the burner like a blowlamp.

His stories of owners, pretending they hadn't touched their stoves when in fact they had wrecked them, whaled away an hour, and his charge was modestly itself. I booked him for regular visits. So now I say to our stove: watch yourself over Christmas. If you look like playing up, Robin will be on you in a flash.

gardening

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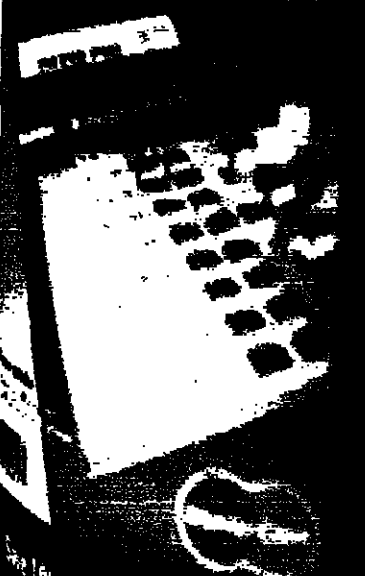


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Shopping: how to get hold of original cartoons.....19
Motoring: the battle for the Third World car market..20

Festive dressing

Six of the best party outfits

Christmas parties are looming. And the big question is what to wear. The best idea by far is to invest in a few key pieces. Start with a good basic tuxedo suit, like the one shown, and dress it up, or down to suit the occasion. Funky satin shirts and gold chain belts can be found at reasonable prices on every high street. And if your funds are low, take heart, party clothes don't have to be expensive to look good, it's how you put them together. Stick to simple formulas, and you won't go far wrong, as long as you observe one golden rule: don't skimp on shoes, a hard night out on the tiles requires good footwear, so spend a bit more and treat yourself to a really fun pair of mules.

1 Black tuxedo suit with satin trim, jacket £50, trousers £35, by Dorothy Perkins, branches nationwide (0171-291 2604); purple satin shirt, £16, from Etam, 484 Oxford Street, London W1 and branches nationwide (0171-494 7732); gold chain belt, £39, from Fenwick, 63 New Bond Street, London W1 (0171-629 9161); black evening shoes with silver buckle, £44.99, by Ravel, 184-188 Oxford Street, London W1 and branches nationwide (0171-631 0224).

2 Black tuxedo trousers, as before; black knitted sleeveless top with beaded detail, £49.99, by Next, 327-329 Oxford Street, London W1 and branches nationwide (0116 4849424); black feather boa, £20, from Debenhams, 334-348 Oxford Street, London W1 (0171-408 4444); black suede shoes with diamante buckle, £39.99, by Ravel, 184-188 Oxford Street, London W1 and branches nationwide (0171-631 0224).

3 Black tuxedo jacket, as before; long black snake glitter print dress, £59.99, by Oasis, enquiries; black Rizzo glitter mules, £42.99, by Ravel, 184-188 Oxford Street, London W1 and branches nationwide (0171-631 0224); bead necklace, £3.99, from Accessorize, 123A Kensington High Street, London W8 and branches nationwide (0171-313 3000).



Photographer: Tony Buckingham Stylist: Holly Davies Assisted by: Sue Ireland

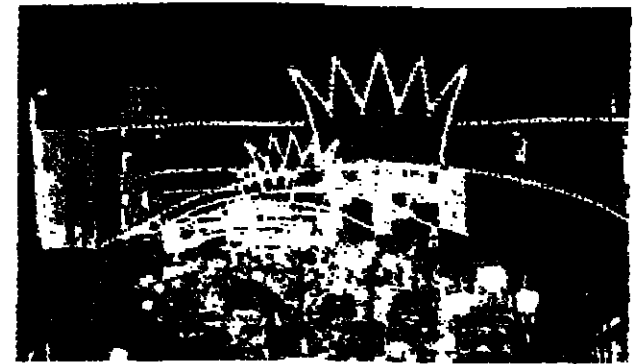


4 Black tuxedo trousers, as before; chocolate brown satin camisole, £14.99, from Knickerbox, branches nationwide (0171-470 6929); brown velvet shirt, £40, by Marks and Spencer, 458 Oxford Street, London W1 and selected branches (0171-935 4422); gold chain belt, £35, from Fenwick, 63 New Bond Street, London W1 (0171-629 9161); black suede lattice strappy shoes, £44.99, by Office, 57 Neal Street, London WC2, branches nationwide/mail order (0181-835 4447).

5 Black tuxedo trousers, as before; gold lace evening dress, £50, by Warehouse, 19-21 Argyl Street, London W1 (0171-278 3491); cream moc-croc strappy wedge shoes, £42.99, by Ravel, 184-188 Oxford Street, London W1 and branches nationwide (0171-631 0224); purple glass beaded necklace, £3.99, from Accessorize, 123A Kensington High Street, London W8 and branches nationwide (0171-313 3000).

6 Black tuxedo jacket, as before; midnight blue shot shirt, £29.99, by Helium, available at Top Shop, Oxford Circus, London W1 and branches nationwide (0171-291 2391); midnight blue and black lace skirt, £49.99, by Next, 327-329 Oxford Street, London W1 and branches nationwide (0116 4849424); black 15 denier tights, £11, by Wolford, 3 South Molton Street, London W1 and department stores nationwide (0171-935 9202); black evening shoes with buckle, detail as before.

The thing about... West End lights



What do John Major and the Spice Girls have in common? No, not the fact that no-one will be able to remember their names this time next year. The answer is fairy lights. For both the PM and the Spice Girls started the illuminations in the two main West End shopping streets this year.

The inadvisedly-clad-for-the-time-of-year warblers attracted a crowd of 5,000 oglers when they switched on Oxford Street. The reputedly most powerful man in the country drew rather fewer punters Regent Streetwards. I'm not sure which is the more tragic: the idea that Major is so out of touch with the electorate that he believed this charade to be a populist vote-winner or the thought that the poor chap might be fulfilling a long-nursed ambition while he still has a chance.

The thing about the West End illuminations is that everything about them seems increasingly tawdry, increasingly anachronistic. In a world where schoolkids routinely conduct Virtual Reality sessions with space creatures, a string of lighted baubles and a Santa who actually moves his arm is about as exciting as clearing the lint out of the tumble dryer. Originally intended to draw shoppers into the main spending areas with the promise of spectacle, the Oxford Street lights have long since been eclipsed by the plate glass windows below.

What's more, the original idea seems to have been replaced by thoughts of cheap advertising. Not content with the punter-drawing propensities of the illuminations, contributing busi-

nesses' main preoccupation seems to be getting their name in lights. Among the weedy Christmas trees dangling from lamp posts is increasing evidence of product placement: pride of place at the top of Regent Street this year is a bright pink neon "Enid Blyton". That's it. No picture to go with it or tied-in illustrations: just "Enid Blyton".

And what's more, they clog the place up like the cold virus. At a time of year when negotiating the drunks, push-chairs and sharp-cornered paper carrier bags would qualify you for Gladiators, the last thing the shopper needs is the added bonus of dodging round blue-rinses who slam the brakes on mid-pavement to say "Ooh! A star!". But that's just what they do. The number of people - invariably women, as a matter of fact - holding up the traffic flow as they take photos of snowflakes suggests that there must be an area of Britain that the electric hasn't reached yet.

But it's tradition, isn't it? A thoroughly twentieth-century one, but we've not come up with many yet. If the lights didn't go up in the West End, the Home Counties' lamentations about slipping standards would make great Country and Western lyrics. There is only one possible answer: to go backward. There was a time when electric light bulbs only came in white, and very stylish they look lining the branches of a leafless tree. Think what it would be like to look up from Oxford Street and see a thousand stars. Then again, looking down again would be even worse.

Serena Mackesy

Christmas clichés: Perfume

It's December, and the perfume wars have begun. Luscious ad campaigns have been dusted down and re-issued to encourage you to buy - or ask for - Obsession, Organza, Allure, Sansara, Escape, XS and so on. But, although these will certainly make you or the object of your affections very happy on the 25th, it also means you can expect to smell it on any number of other people when you return to work. And as for buying someone a small they already wear, well, it's a bit of a cop-out. Far better to take a risk and look beyond the block-busters of the perfume market.

According to Angela Cressy, perfume buyer at Harrods, the key to buying perfume for someone else is identifying the family from which their preferred perfumes come. If they wear floral fragrances like Anais Anais or Diorella then look for something with similar notes. The four main families are floral, oriental, chypre and fougere. Most of the following shops will be able to advise you.

Jo Malone is the current star of the fragrance world and her little shop in London's Walton Street is the perfect place to start

your search for the perfect Christmas scent (they also supply mail order). The shop specialises in colognes, which are lighter than full-blown perfumes, and bath oils and body lotions to enable customers to layer their chosen fragrances. Chic Chanel-esque bottles are filled with unlikely sounding, but superb smelling combinations: Nutmeg & Ginger (£28, 100ml), Lime Basil & Mandarin (Jo's signature fragrance) and Amber & Lavender. Malone is also the pioneer of fragrance combining, which allows the customer to create his or her own

signature scent. Fragrance Combining Kits start at £33.50 and include a choice of seven different 30ml colognes. To combine a fragrance you either apply the stronger cologne, let it dry on the skin and then spray the lighter one on top, or, when using more than two, you simply spray them on different parts of the body: the aromas combine as they warm on the skin.

If it's a whiff of tradition you're after, then Penhaligon's is the place to go. Ty Hammam, their oldest aftershave - an unusual blend of lavender, sandalwood and Eastern

rose. Penhaligon's range of colognes, scents and aftershaves also includes a number of single flower fragrances which are exceptionally true, with none of the cloying sweetness associated with floral perfumes. Most unusual of all is Bluebell (£28, 50ml). Of their blended fragrances Cornubia should find favour with women who like warm, spicy perfumes from the oriental family (£36, 50ml). Like

Jo Malone, Penhaligon's also sells selection packs, but these are for the indecisive and are not designed for mixing (£18 for four miniature colognes). Their latest creation, Quercus, is fresh and clean and should appeal to men and women who like androgynous scents like CK1, but want something that won't be instantly recognised.

The perfume halls at all the large department stores are the perfect hunting ground for those difficult types whose tastes, although adventurous, lie firmly within designer label territory. And top of the designer charts is Chanel No5, arguably the world's most famous perfume, and Harrods' annual Christmas best seller. But, although

delicious, No5 is one of the block-busters. Better then to visit a Chanel boutique and try something rather different without forfeiting the label status: No22, Cuir de Russie, Gardenia, or

Bois des Iles all come in the trademark black on white livery, and are only available direct from Chanel. Most infamous is Cuir de Russie which is an extraordinary and heady mix of leather, bergamot, mandarin and jasmine. When it was first launched in 1924 it was considered far too exotic and

sensual for nicely brought-up young ladies. A bottle of the eau de parfum (£86, 14ml), or eau de toilette (£74, £200ml) should make you or someone else very happy indeed. If money is no object, hurry to Harrods and snap up one of the last bottles of Guerlain's Djedi which has been re-issued for Christmas. Harrods unpacked eight bottles at the start of the month and there are only a couple left.

Jo Malone, 154 Walton Street, London SW3 (0171-581 1101).
Jo Malone mail order, Sent-a-Scent - 0171-720 0202.
Penhaligon's customer enquiries - 0800 517332.
Harrods - 0171-730 1234.
Chanel - 0171-235 6631.

Charlotte Packer

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Cash in on cartoons

By John Windsor

The county set thinks Dicky and Daffy Tooting are absolutely topping. A well-to-do Surrey farmer took her pair of pet sheep to the preview of the eccentric couple's selling exhibition in London's Mayfair – and Sir Angus Ogilvy was guest of honour at its opening.

Dicky and Daffy, as readers of *Country Life* will know, are cartoon strip characters – ageing huntin', shootin' aristocrats whose ability to cope with the modern world depends largely on the resourceful Mrs Shaggle, their only remaining servant, and regular inclusions of gin and tonic. Typical gag, from Dicky: "The barbers are at the gates... I've just found Freddy playing computer croquet".

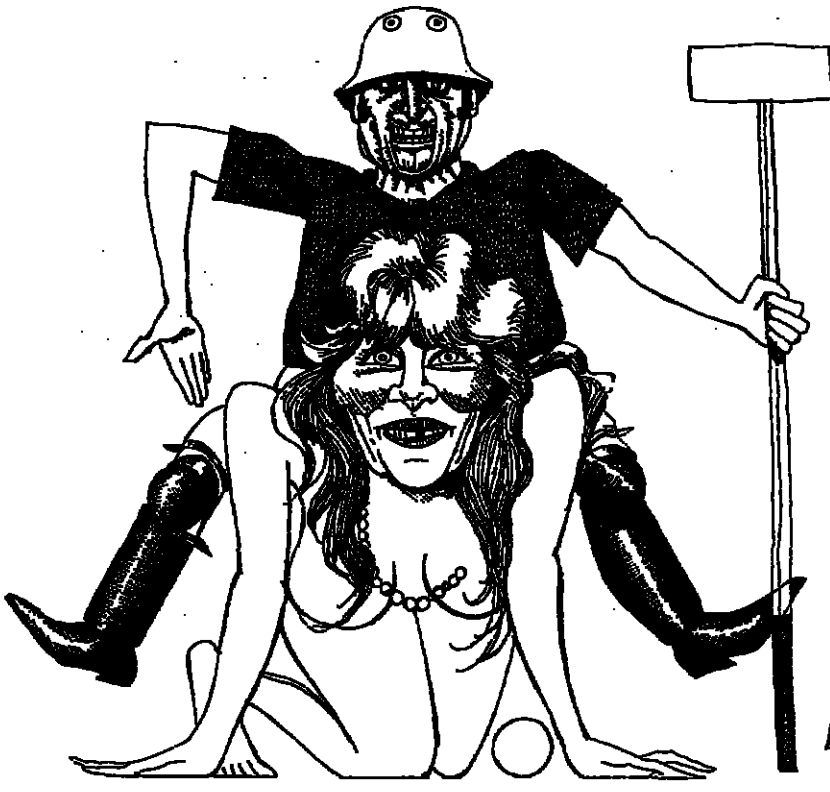
At the smart O'Shea Gallery's exhibition, the colourful original artwork by 37-year-old Annie Tempest is selling for £425 per framed strip – double the going rate for newspaper editorial-page cartoons. Her specially drawn single images are £295-£550 framed.

But it is not just the high prices that make Dicky and Daffy a publishing phenomenon. It is their merchandising. Green wellie types, who would never be seen dead in a product named T-shirt, are being offered 12 up-market Tooting tie-ins. No other cartoonist for adults has made such a hit with manufacturers.

The face of a British-made Corniche-style 11-jewel carriage clock, commissioned by Halcyon Days – the London suppliers of *objets d'art* – sports a hand-drawn portrait of Dicky and Daffy clinking champagne glasses at a picnic. It costs £645. Halcyon Days are also selling an enamel box with hand-drawn Tootings, £125. There are mugs (£12), ashtrays (£25), teapots (£35) and a tie with Tooting crest by Thomas Pink (£29.50). At £150 a pair – Tooting crested velvet slippers by Henry Maxwell, sponsor of Tempest's book *Tooting-by-Gently*: limited edition of 500, £30 each.

Expensive though Tempest's original drawings may sound, they are pocket money compared with the £9,500 being asked by the London gallerist Chris Beetles for Ralph Steadman's original pen and ink cover for *Punch*, commemorating the magazine's 150th anniversary.

As prices for living cartoonists go, Tempest is sole trader in a middle market of her own, patronised less by cartoon connoisseurs than by well-welcomed countryfolk eager to validate their lifestyle. Above her: Beetles. Below her: Jack Duncan's cartoon and book gallery in Museum Street, Bloomsbury, where I bought Willie Rushton's 1991



Private Eye cartoon of Jilly Cooper for £45.

Tempest had had qualms about O'Shea's bullish prices for her work, but was consoled when I explained how the cartoon market is constructed. "I suppose, then," she said, "that I'm the Old Rectory, Beetles is the stately home and Duncan, er, the stable block?"

Duncan's is the fun end of the market (guffawing at Scarfe or Steadman's surreal satire at Beetles' is a gaffe of H M Batemanesque proportions). The ebullient Duncan – a writer in the Sixties for the BBC's pioneer satirical show *That Was the Week That Was*, and the man who made Les Dawson famous on Yorkshire television – holds bi-monthly openings of newspaper cartoon exhibitions and stocks work by more than a dozen cartoonists. Editorial-page cartoons by Chris Riddell are about £250 framed; gags by Ed McLachlan such as his wildlife vigilantes liberating pools of live

yoghurt from a supermarket, £100.

You can still telephone newspaper and magazine cartoonists to offer to buy their work. But Rushton (another *That Was the Week That Was* man) and Riddell now sell theirs exclusively through Duncan. Rushton told me: "I'd rather somebody else handled the selling side. Jack can deal with problems and ask for more money. It's worth that extra percentage".

But just because a London gallery has begun adopting Grub Street cartoonists does not mean they are going up in the world. Duncan pockets a modest 35 per cent commission (50 per cent is the norm). And the cartoonists themselves are showing symptoms of identity crisis, being unsure whether or not they should be coming out of the closet – which is where most collectors hang their work.

Duncan's robust opinion is that there are not enough cartoons in closets. "Let's not be pretentious about cartoons," he says.

"I'm not trying to glamorise them, nor trying to pretend they haven't been paid for once already by newspapers. That's why I ask artists to keep their prices low. The public's not daft."

"But an original by a really brilliant cartoonist knocks spots off your average wishy-washy watercolour of a garden gate – and it's a fraction of the price."

At the Beetles stately home, the artists are dignified by the title "illustrator", rather than "cartoonist". If you are thinking of investing, the safest bet is the increasing value of the work of his "big three": Ralph Steadman, Gerald Scarfe – and Ronald Searle, the GOM of cartoon illustration, to whom both Steadman and Scarfe are stylistically indebted. Prices, says Beetles, have doubled in five years. His current big annual exhibition, showing the work of 75 artists, took £150,000 even before it opened.

Nostalgia is potent in this market. Never mind if Scarfe's and Steadman's barbs remind you of Gilray – the correct market comparison is with E H Shepherd, whose whimsical drawings of Winnie the Pooh fetch up to £15,000 at auction.

Beetles can be sure of getting £5,000 for a major Scarfe or Steadman. £2,000-3,000 for a Searle – especially a St Trinians or a Molesworth. At a London auction house such as Christie's South Kensington or Phillips you might pay half those sums for such treasures – if you are lucky. Searle is avidly collected in America, where he used to live, and in Germany, where his prices have hit £10,000.

You, too, should dig deep but be discriminating. Cartoons of faded celebrities enacting forgotten stories are the market's turkeys. The fact that at Phillips in March four framed cartoons by leading newspaper cartoonists Jon and Cummings, showing the trade unionist Clive Jenkins, failed to sell even at the meagre estimate of £70-£100, is a warning. Duncan slashes the prices of cartoons unsold after six months. There's no news like old news.

'Tooting-by-Gently' in Mayfair, O'Shea Gallery until 23 December (9.30am-6pm, Saturdays 9.30am-1pm), 120 Mount Street, London W1 (0171-351 3321). The Illustrators at the Chris Beetles gallery, Monday-Saturday (10am-5.30pm) until 25 January. Jack Duncan Cartoons and Books, 10am-6pm, Saturdays 11am-5pm, 44 Museum Street, London WC1 (0171-242 3335).

Pictures: Willie Rushton's 1991 'Private Eye' cartoon of Jilly Cooper. Inset: Annie Tempest's lucrative creations 'Dicky and Daffy'.

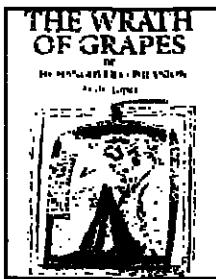


bazaar

good thing

The Wrath of Grapes, £7.99

Although the sub-title of this pocket-sized gem is *The Hangover Companion*, it is not a guide to how to get one – after all, we all know how that's done. Instead, it's a step-by-step guide to avoiding them without having to give up drink. And should a heavy head and heaving stomach slip through the net, there is a whole chapter devoted to dealing with your hangover. First off is correct identification: have you landed yourself with a "monster maker" or a "time traveller" – or is it a "slow burner"? The final chapter is a spectacular collection of hangover cures including the legendary Hair of the Dog and the alarming Hangman's Blood. For stockists and mail order call: 0171-530 9307



mad thing

The Winter Chills & Misery Kit, £25+£6p&p

Once again pockets across the country are stuffed with snotty loo paper, and offices are full of people who should be at home, tucked up in bed. The best way to ensure that ailing workers stay at home with their germs, is to send them one of the Gluttonous Gardener's wonderful mini hampers. The Winter Chills and Misery Kit is of course the most appropriate. The crate contains a bottle of whisky, a couple of lemons, cloves, cinnamon, a jar of honey and a glass from which to lug it.



The Gluttonous Gardener, 0171-371 0775

sure thing

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We have had an overwhelming response to our Habitat Christmas shopping party. Due to readers' concerns about not receiving their invitations in time by post, we are printing a special bonus token today. Simply take it along to your nearest Habitat store on Thursday 12 December, between 6pm to 9pm, and you will be able to attend our exclusive shopping party and enjoy a 10 per cent discount on everything (Dublin and Belfast stores are not participating).

For nearest store call 0645 334433. Terms & Conditions as previously published in *The Independent* and the *Independent on Sunday* (23-26 November 1996).



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DON'T ANY MEN in Scotland read the Independent? English, tallish, 45, attractive female, from Edinburgh. Busy but needs more. Box No E1772.

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ARTICULATE, LIVELY-MINDED. Successful woman, 40's, seeks educated man of wit and imagination, 30's, to share life's pleasures. Box No E1777.

AUTHOR/PUBLISHER (London-based, 50, divorced, rural writing) seeks a woman to co-write a book on 'Romantic Wives' and 'The Art of Writing'. Box No E1779.

WESLEY, good writing skills, mature personal skills, free to travel. Box No E1780.

Photo-CV+Letter. Box No E1781.

MAN, YOUNG-LOOKING 41, Radio 4, a sedate, successful, charming, well travelled with wide-ranging interests. WITM (body) and (body) under 35 years and living in Spain for friendship and possibly long-term relationship. Box No E1778.

MAN, 55, LOVER of old cities and lonely hills, the written word and painted canvas, seeks woman with similar interests for companionship, support, and affection. N London but will travel. Box No E1778.

GOOD-LOOKING DUTCH LADY (50), living in Germany, seeks an intelligent, warm-hearted man, interested in languages, art, etc. Box No E1779.

FRIENDSHIP, POSSIBLE ROMANCE. Attractive female, young 40, 5'7", slim blonde, outgoing, romantic, adventurous. Seeks similar male, 35-45, for writing, dining & easy nights in. Photo please. Box No E1778.

WARM YOUNG WOMAN. Looks good in wetlands or heels. Seeks down to earth, non-smoker, 40's man with big heart and silly face. For sharing good time ahead. Suitable for friendship. Box No E1772.

TEACHER, 35, WARM, caring and quite good-looking. seeks a decent, successful woman for friendship and romance. London based. Photo essential. Box No E1778.

SULTRY SEDUCTIVE FEMALE. 5'7", slim, sexy, intelligent, prof. looking for fun, friendship & romance from the right person only. Are you a black, intelligent, very handsome male, with a wicked SMILE who knows how to treat a lady? If so, I am waiting for your reply. Photo is a necessity! Box No E1778.

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HANDSOME AMERICAN MALE, 30, visiting the UK. I am a successful professional with a beautiful blonde. My home needs the touch of a good woman to be perfect. Box No E1772.

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homes & money

The price of your child's education ...22
December is hosting a property boom ...26



I had no faith

My biggest mistake

Entrepreneur
Pamela Stevens

"I opened my first beauty salon in 1978, and we now have five salons of our own, plus three franchises and a fourth due to open in January. We've got 48 people working for us, and clients such as Linda Bellingham and Gillian Telford. Probably my biggest mistake came in 1985. We had two salons at the time, and had the chance to buy a third one in Barnet. But we didn't have the money. A friend of mine offered to lend me £25,000 - that was the price of the property - but I had an attack of fear. I was afraid that the business would not be profitable enough to sustain a long-lasting investment. I was terrified that I wouldn't be able to pay her back, so I never took her up on the loan. In the end, we managed to get the money together, partly out of cash flow and partly by borrowing some money from leasing companies. That

was very expensive, but I couldn't get the money off the bank. We bought the Barnet shop six months later. It took about two years for Barnet to show a profit, and I could probably have paid the loan back within two years as well, which my friend would have been perfectly happy with. Now I'd say to people, 'Don't ever be frightened. Go for it'. You should have enough faith in your own ability to do it. If the same situation arose now, I'd definitely take her up on it. It was just that £25,000 was such a lot of money to this girl. I thought if I couldn't pay her back, I just wouldn't have been able to live with it. If I couldn't have paid the banks back, that wouldn't have bothered me half as much, to be honest. When I started in business, I tried to get a £300 overdraft from Lloyds, and they turned me down flat. They said I had never had any experience,

and they could not give me an overdraft. They looked at me as if I was rather stupid. Then I changed to Barclays. This was when I was opening my fifth clinic, in Knightsbridge. We'd just fitted out Muswell Hill, and we didn't have enough money to buy Knightsbridge, but it was a liquidation that came up suddenly, and I thought I'd better have it. I went to Barclays and spoke to them. The manager's attitude - not just his attitude, he actually said it - was that women should stay in the kitchen. They should not be in business in any way. I was divorced with two kids. How was I supposed to I keep them? The other thing he said was why did I think a girl from the East End could open up in Knightsbridge? Then I went to Midland, and they've been brilliant ever since. I also had a loan of £500 from my Mum in the early days. I was con-

vinced a beauty salon could be a good business proposition, because there was nothing in Holloway. If you wanted some sort of beauty treatment, you either had a mobile therapist or you went into the West End. I thought I couldn't be the only woman in North London who needed her legs waxed. I said to my Mum: 'I only need a few bob - let's just give it a go', and she lent me £500. I didn't have a lot to lose at the time. For the first six months, we didn't do too well. I was working in a bar at night as well to pay the rent. My Mum was worried because £500 was quite a chunk of money to her. She was very surprised to get it back. But it suddenly clicked, and that was it. It's been growing like Topsy ever since. Pamela Stevens is the founder of Pamela Stevens beauty clinics. She was talking to Paul Slade.

Fix up a deal before the market booms

Clifford German on a surge in mortgage rates

The sight of mortgage rates starting to rise after less than two years is bound to raise questions in the mind of any prudent borrower. Mortgage rates shot up to 15 per cent as recently as 1990 and the burden of expensive mortgages helped to drive down property prices and create negative equity. Could it all happen again?

The economy is still growing and unemployment is falling, and these trends should continue through 1997 into 1998. The property market is beginning to strengthen, and all these are classic indicators of a surge in inflation two years from now.

Kenneth Clarke faces the same dilemma Nigel Lawson faced in 1988. If he holds interest rates down, he invites an inflationary boom. If he puts them up, he can either stall the recovery prematurely or attract so much speculative money into sterling that the strength of the currency starts to make UK exports too dear and UK imports too cheap, which is another classic high-road to trouble.

But Mr Clarke has avoided the temptation to cut taxes as well. In 1988, an unsustainable boom was triggered after taxes were cut. The chances of a rerun of the boom and slump are slight, but it is common sense to ask whether anything similar could happen now to push mortgage rates back into double figures. If that does happen, anyone stuck with a variable rate mortgage would have no protection against the surge in rates. Borrowers who have taken out a mortgage since 1 October last year would also find that if they lost their job through illness, injury or redundancy, the state would



Going for broke: The boom in the 1980s put a lot of people out of pocket

only start paying mortgage interest nine months after a claim was lodged. That effectively means anyone who does not have a mortgage indemnity guarantee policy will have to sell their house before they can begin to claim benefit.

Anyone who has taken out a discount or cashback mortgage with a redemption penalty will have to pay a sum usually equal to the full benefit obtained from the offer to escape from an upturn in standard variable rates.

Borrowers who are still waiting for a share bonus from the four societies converting to banks next year - the Halifax, the A&L, the Woolwich and the Northern Rock - are stuck with what they have. Some of the better fixed-rate mortgages are being withdrawn.

But there are still some fixed-rate offers around for borrowers ready to sign up quickly for a mortgage or a remortgage of their property.

Irish Permanent offers to lend up to 75 per cent of the property valuation at 4.35 per cent for two years. Bank of Ireland offers a fixed-rate mortgage of 4.85 per cent on up to 80 per cent of the value of a property, with the rate fixed until the beginning of November 1998. The best three-year fixed-rate mortgage is 6.59 per cent from Cheshire BS. The best five-year fixed rate is 7.49 per cent from Northern Rock.

Borrowers might want to consider a five-year capped mortgage from Coventry Building Society, which will lend up to 95 per cent of the surveyor's valuation. The rate starts at 6.99 per cent this month and rises to 7.25 per cent in January. It can rise and fall for the next five years but it cannot exceed 7.90 per cent between now and February 2002. The rate will then revert to the privilege rate for established borrowers.

Sun Bank has launched Reflex, a new flexible mort-

gage which borrowers can draw on for new loans up to the amount of the original mortgage or repay faster. Minimum withdrawals and repayments are £750 and up to three of each are permitted each year free of charge. But borrowers are tied to the standard variable rate, currently 7.49 per cent.

Meanwhile for those with steady nerves, it is still possible to find an attractive cashback or discount mortgage. Newcastle BS has revived its cashback offer, giving new borrowers an instant rebate of 5 per cent of the loan.

The Newcastle's current variable rate is 6.99 per cent and an extra 0.25 per cent is charged if borrowers do not take out at least one of a range of three insurance policies with the society. A fee of £295 is required, and borrowers have to return the cashback if they redeem the mortgage before February 2003.

If your partner died tomorrow, how could your family survive?

No one likes to think about the possibility of untimely death.

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*Source: OPCS Statistics 1992.

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Lessons in budgeting

Clifford German on a school plan

Personal finance will start rearing its ugly head in secondary schools shortly before (or shortly after) the start of the 21st century if the Personal Finance Education Group gets its way. The group launched this week is the brainchild of Robert Browne-Clayton, chief executive of Independent Financial Adviser Promotion, the trade association for IFAs, but it has the backing of the Association of British Insurers, the Association of Investment Trust Companies, Autif, the unit trust trade body, the Life Insurance Association, Imro, the investment managers regulatory organisation which is providing a secretariat, and ProShare, which is providing the chairman, Gill Nott.

The initial membership also includes Umist, formerly part of Manchester University and NatWest Bank, which has done more than most to promote financial literacy, in association with the University of Warwick. Government departments, including the Treasury, the DSS, the Department for Education and Employment, and the DTI have observer status, as do the Securities and Investment Board and the Personal Investment Authority.

At this stage the members are drawing up a plan of action, after which they will start to look for funding. In the current climate the Government is unlikely to loosen its purse-strings if it thinks it can get the private sector to do so, but the steering committee will certainly be willing to accept funding from banks or insurance companies, provided of course that it offered without strings.

The group does not intend to put an army of trained financial advisers into the schools, or to draw up a formal curriculum for education in personal finance. It hopes to draw up a series of briefings which schoolteachers may want to introduce into lessons in history, personal and social development.

It may also try to negotiate a way for volunteers from the personal finance industry to come into schools to say their piece, in much the same way as NatWest Bank's Community Investment programme does. The initial effort will almost certainly be devoted to the more elementary aspects of personal finance such as basic budgeting, the avoidance of debt, regular savings and the need for insurance. Only afterwards will it start to move towards more advanced concepts such as mortgages, tax-free investments, risk evaluation and buying shares.

Nobody doubts that schools are the places to start, although it might be as difficult to retain the attention of teenagers with classes on the merits of providing for long-term care for the elderly as it is to keep them interested in history or civics. If it can win over the support of Britain's notoriously sensitive and self-important teaching unions however, the initiative might start making a positive contribution to what is arguably the most important social problem facing the UK, perhaps even more important than employment prospects.

After all, only about 20 per cent of the population runs a real risk of long-term unemployment, but it could well be argued that in excess of 80 per cent of the adult population is financially illiterate and incapable of making the necessary financial decisions en route from cradle to the grave.

Whether an initiative with relatively modest initial objectives will be able to get the message across fast enough and far enough to cope with a problem which is growing in size and is cascading rapidly backwards through the generations, to affect progressively younger adults who until recently were only really concerned with getting and paying a mortgage and a car loan, is a different question.

There is also potential for disputes between the factions in the personal finance industry.

Commercial interests can never be kept out, and it may be hard to avoid conflicts between the interests and ethics of teachers, financial advisers and companies with salesmen and products to promote.



loose change

Abbey National has increased its interest rates for savers as well as borrowers this week, and other building societies and banks are expected to follow, although the majority now seem inclined to wait until after the next Wednesday's meeting between the Governor and the Chancellor to review interest rates.

Abbey has increased the offer on £9,000 in its third edition Tessa from 6.25 per cent to 6.40 per cent, but most products get less of an uplift. Interest on £5,000 in an investment account goes up from 3.85 per cent to 3.95 per cent. Next month Abbey will launch a capital-guaranteed stock market Tessa and raise rates on its fixed-rate bonds.

Bradford & Bingley has

paying 7 per cent gross annual interest or 6.75 per cent payable monthly. Rates are fixed until March 1999 and the minimum investment is £1,000.

Direct Line is offering a two-year fixed rate bond paying 6.15 per cent gross in year one and 7.55 per cent in year two. Minimum investment is £10,000.

London-based SEC Group, which owns the largest market-maker in traded endowment policies (those sold by policyholders who no longer want or can afford them but prefer to sell rather than just surrender the policy) is launching the first PEP investing in policies. An initial charge of around 5 per cent and annual fees of 1.5 per cent

Cinderella steps out

Alison Eadie continues her series on specialist funds

Financial funds often feel as though they are investment Cinderellas – ignored, unloved and put-upon. But for those who run them, there is an increasing expectation that they are about to get to the ball after all. The specialist funds they represent invest in the shares of banks, insurance companies and other financial services businesses, including investment trusts.

The dwindling band of such specialist unit trusts – there are only four left after Barclays Unicorn Financial Trust converted to a FTSE 100 index tracker fund in August – occupy a separate category with property funds in the Association of Unit Trusts and Investment Funds directory.

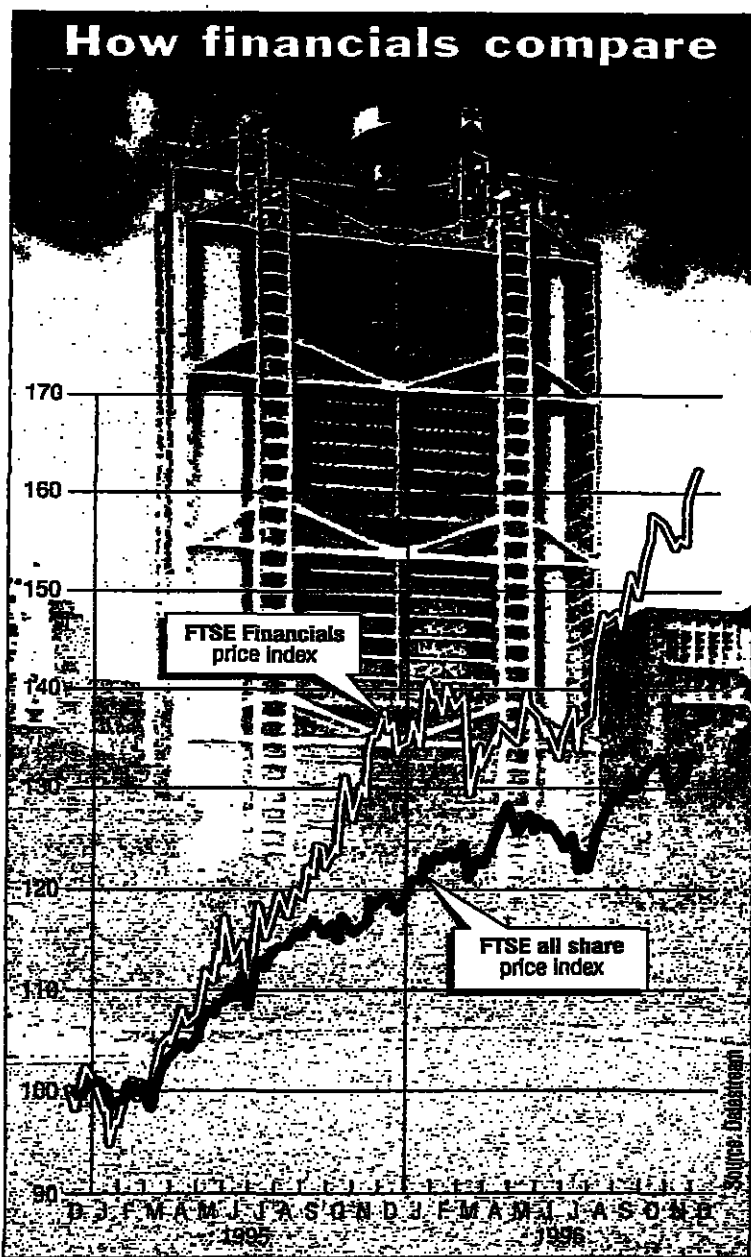
However, Auris is set to recategorise the funds in the new year, which could herald the start of their fight for recognition. Richard Peirson, manager of Framlington Financial Fund, says that being parked in a sub-sector has caused financial funds to be overlooked, despite the good performance of some. "When our fund moves into the international growth sector, where it sits naturally, we will come near the top of the pile and independent financial advisers will start to focus on us," he says.

In the five years to October, Framlington Financial grew by 174.8 per cent, while Save & Prosper Financial Securities Fund grew by 172.1 per cent. Over the same period, funds analyst Microcap shows the international equity growth average was up 87.4 per cent. In a field of 126 unit trusts, Framlington Financial was beaten by just three funds – two technology and its own healthcare fund.

The international label does not apply to financial funds equally. Framlington is highly diversified, with only 25 per cent of its assets in the UK and the lion's share of 40 per cent in the US. S&P Financial has closer to 60 per cent invested in the UK. Edinburgh Financial Fund 70 per cent and Hill Samuel Financial Trust 71 per cent.

Whatever the geographic split, financial funds aim to deliver above-average growth in the long term from an industry sector that is growing and globalising fast. With predictions being made that just 30 big players will dominate the global insurance scene within 10 years, a fund manager's job is to pick the likely winners.

Chris Jeffrey, manager of Hill Samuel Financial Trust, says: "The



long-term winners will be companies with a strong brand name and good distribution channels providing the right products at low cost."

Growth prospects for financial services are based on demographics. An ageing world population and the inability of governments to fund the retirement needs of their citizens offer many opportunities, particularly in pension provision and long-term care. Technology will continue to

provide opportunities for efficiency gains and cost-cutting in the banking sector. The US and the UK are already well down the consolidation road, but Europe is only setting out.

Both the Framlington and S&P funds have been increasing their European weightings recently. However Robin Evans, manager of S&P Financial, says that finding attractive European companies earning a decent return on equity is not easy.

As well as geographic asset allocation differences, financial funds invest in different types of company within the financial services sector. Framlington Financial has a third of assets in big banking and insurance groups and two thirds in smaller, niche companies. Mr Peirson says smaller, specialist companies are often accorded lower market ratings than big companies but deliver faster growth.

By contrast, S&P Financial concentrates on mid-size to large companies and Hill Samuel Financial invests mainly in the banking and insurance constituents of the FTSE 100 share index. Over five years to the end of October it grew by 127.2 per cent.

The rating of financial funds depends on their geographic bias and their exposure to large or small companies. Mr Peirson believes Framlington Financial is lower risk than specialist technology or healthcare funds because financial services stocks tend to be less volatile.

Mr Jeffrey says that unit trust rules limiting the concentration of assets to no more than 10 per cent in one company can be awkward when big banks are the key drivers of growth. He points out that HSBC Group, the banking giant which owns Midland Bank, makes up about 18 per cent of the FTA Financials index, a weighting he cannot replicate in the fund.

The rather more slow-moving financial services world can be threatened at the edges by developments such as supermarket banking, but the oligopoly position of the big ones ensures them some protection, says Mr Evans. The biggest risks are inflation and interest rates.

Framlington's exposure to smaller companies and non-traditional financials makes it less sensitive to rising interest rates and bond yields.

If markets turn bearish, financial unit trusts have the scope to increase holdings in investment trusts. S&P holds Temple Emerging Markets and Hill Samuel 3i and Electra, although these trusts are not invested in financial services.

For the moment, however, bearish thoughts have been banished. Even if interest rates pick up in the US and UK, the swing is not expected to be dramatic and high unemployment levels in Europe should keep the lid on rates there. The outlook for financial funds is set reasonably fair, fund managers believe.

Regular readers of this column will not, I hope, be too surprised at the recent clear signs of improvement in the housing market. A significant revival in house prices was one of my "banker" forecasts for 1996, and the most recent statistics have clearly shown that it is now starting to come through.

As someone who is buying a new house myself, I am impressed by the anecdotal evidence that the price expectations of buyers and sellers are now converging rapidly to the point where (a) more good quality houses are finally starting to come on to the market; and (b) most of those that do are starting to sell both quickly and at, or relatively close to, the asking price. The third quarter of this year was one of the first for several years in which prices rose (a) by more than the rate of inflation; and (b) by more than the cost of a mortgage. As my charts show, the number of transactions is beginning to pick up and most of the other traditional indicators are now positive too.

Does that mean houses are a good investment now? The three key variables are house prices, mortgage rates and stock market returns (if that is, you opt to go for an endowment policy or a PEP-backed mortgage, currently the cheapest option). It makes sense to look at these three in real terms – ie, after inflation – as inflation itself is hard to forecast and real returns are what ultimately matter.

House prices: Since the war, house prices have been notoriously volatile, but the long-term real return on houses from 1945 to 1995, according to the Bank of England, has been 2.7 per cent a year, and should continue.

Mortgage rates: In the short



Jonathan Davis

Houses may be a first rate investment once again

term, these are clearly heading up, but on a longer-term view, whatever happens to inflation, my view is that the most likely trend of mortgage rates in real terms is down. Mortgages costing 5 per cent in real terms are a historical aberration.

Stock market returns: The average long-run real return on equities has been 7 per cent to 8 per cent. After allowing for costs and charges, it is more realistic to call this a real return of 5 per cent to 6 per cent.

Adding all this up, if things go by the history book, someone buying a house today might reasonably aspire to generate a long-term real return of 2 per cent to 3 per cent on the house, plus (less certainly) 5 per cent to 6 per cent on a mortgage-funding PEP. The mortgage should finance the house at a real cost

of 3 per cent to 5 per cent a year. That gives a potential overall return of somewhere between 2 per cent (2+5-5) and 6 per cent (3+6-3) a year in real terms.

Compound, this looks an attractive prospect to me. True, some of the factors that drove the bull market in the 1980s – for example, the value of Miras tax relief on high interest rates – are no longer as potent as they were.

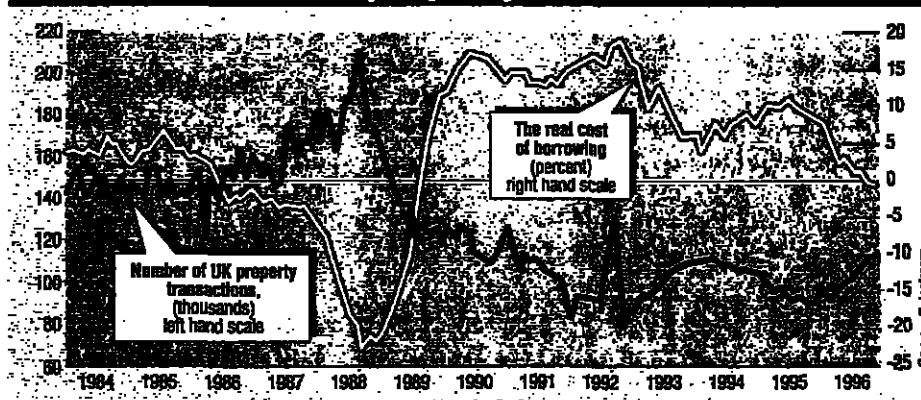
But the underlying economics of house purchase, which are driven by a growing population with rising incomes trying to live in an increasingly overcrowded island, still look robust enough to assume there will be some positive real return over time. It could be a substantial one.

Just as importantly the downside risks now look to be limited. Higher real mortgage rates? Over time, I cannot see much risk of that. Demutualisation and the merger craze among building societies mean that more lenders are charging higher, market-led rates. But competitive pressures and consumer awareness work the other way.

The stock market is a bigger risk. Anyone buying a house must expect to live through at least one major bear market. I expect that a Labour government will also, however good its intentions, end up mucking around with the tax system to the disadvantage of income earners and house owners alike.

Overall, however, if these figures are right, and provided buyers can manage their liquidity, it is hard not to see some very real investment value again in today's housing market. How long, I wonder, before others come to the same conclusion and turn this into a self-fulfilling prophecy?

The property market



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It's hammer time

Auctions are now a valid way of acquiring a home. By Penny Jackson

An auctioneer can always spot the ordinary buyers. They look nervous and at the end of the bidding are quite likely to shriek with joy or burst into tears of disappointment. These buyers have not only upped the emotional stakes in the auction room, they have been pushing up the prices as well.

Unlike the professional buyer whose profit margins will dictate when he should quit, those who intend to live in the property will go that bit further. They have already set their hearts on a place and have invested time and money in preparing for the sale. They are not likely to be alone though. The major auction houses have all seen an increasing number of ordinary buyers and it is not unusual to have 50 people viewing a property at one time. Nor is it rare for properties to be sold prior to auction at a good price. James Coker of Edwin Evans auctioneers says that private clients asking for lists have been melting the phones. "We now have telephone bidding which makes the process more attractive to people who cannot afford the time to attend."

Although the public perception of buying at auction has changed and it has become a valid way of acquiring a home, in some people's mind the notion still lingers that it is a cheaper way. The flood of building society repossessions which dominated this market in the early Nineties confirmed the impression that there were good deals to be had. And even now, in a rising market, some distasteful advertising of repossession lists suggests there are rich pickings. These lists are costly and generally out of date. Some agents, it has to be said, are also keen to point out the profit buyers



This unmodernised Hampstead house has attracted a lot of interest with a guide price of £750,000 in Allsop's next sale

have made out of a repossession. All this adds up to an impression that auctions mean bargains. Far from it. Certain types of property do better at auction than through an agent and it is certainly not a choice of last resort any more than it is a dumping ground for repossessions.

Black Horse Corporate Property Services act for a range of different lenders in taking responsibility for repossessions. Mike Spencer, the general manager, is aware that they have a connotation of discount, but is clear about the duty to market a property effectively. "People are wrong if they imagine they are going to get a

bargain. We have a best price policy. Certainly none of the major lenders would wish to see a property advertised as a repossession." The kind of property that most ordinary buyers are interested in at present is the unmodernised houses and flats in good, well-established residential areas. The wreck of a cottage with holes in the roof and no running water has always been auction fodder with limited appeal, but the prospect of a structurally sound house that needs bringing up to date is a manageable project. It is also likely to meet the criteria of banks and building societies who are

extremely pedantic when considering applications these days.

Chris Beniman, a partner at Allsop, the auctioneers, has seen prices in this section go well above the guide. In the October sale, a Richmond house they expected to sell for £100,000 went for £127,500. "One of the chief attractions of buying at auction is that when the hammer comes down the property is yours. People are fed up with gazumping and chains and they like to know where they are. It's good fun too." The excitement of bidding can quickly turn to dismay for those who are forced to withdraw. They see money spent on sur-

Auction tips

from James Coker of Edwin Evans

Attend a couple of auctions before attempting to buy and view a selection of properties.

When you have decided on a property take catalogue details with the auction date to a solicitor. There may be only two or three weeks in which to complete legal inquiries. The auctioneers often have packets of documentation.

Get a structural survey or home buyers report. Financing must be agreed before the auction. You will have to pay a deposit there and then and the contract is binding. Keep in touch with auctioneer.

Listen to any announcements at the start of the auction. Take a solicitor with you. Make sure the property you buy is insured immediately. If the property has not sold leave your highest bid with auction room staff.

veyors and solicitors go down the drain and the house they imagined as theirs move out of reach. Those tempted to carry on bidding must remember that when the hammer falls, there is no going back. James Coker recalls one couple who had a costly lapse of concentration. "They thought they were bidding for a flat, but found themselves owing a 15ft triangular piece of shopfront. They had to complete."

Edwin Evans (0171-228 5864). Allsop (0171-494 3686). Dates of public auctions are published in the Property Bid List. Faxwise Auction Information Service, local and trade press.

Loft property

By Stella Bingham

Loft living is the success story of the design-conscious Nineties. The concept is simple. Take an old warehouse, industrial or commercial building, do up the common parts and divide the rest up into big empty spaces. Buyers start with a blank canvas to paint their fantasies on.

A lot of architectural lessons have been learnt as a result of lofts. Wooden floors, glass block walls, stainless steel units, big airy rooms - all typical of lofts - are now going into modern buildings, says David Salvi of agents Hurford Salvi Carr in loft-rich Clerkenwell, central London.

Lofts currently on his books include nine large shells priced from £189,500 in the Art Deco Beauchamp Building behind High Holborn. "There will never be a problem selling lofts but of course when you come to sell, you are not selling a shell, you are selling a flat. That market still has to be tested."

But Sarah Shelley of Knight Frank's Wapping office in London's Docklands has plenty of experience reselling lofts. She first sold empty shells in 1981 when they were called warehouse conversions, and laughs at the idea that they are a Nineties phenomenon.

"Everyone thought we were completely mad to try to sell space with no kitchen or bathroom. Now people are buying what I first sold then and demand is good."

The golden rules for loft or warehouse buyers who hope to sell at a profit is not to spend too much on fitting out and not to be too eccentric. "If space allows a second bedroom, have

it," advises David Salvi. Some developers are so confident of the continuing appeal of lofts that they are not only selling them ready-fitted but are building brand new ones.

The Manhattan Loft Corporation sold shells in Clerkenwell and in the heart of Soho but Bankside Lofts is a mixture of old and new, shell and fitted flats. "Our in-house design team produce the product so that you can buy and live in a loft without having to become a part-time property developer," says marketing director Harry Downes. Prices for the fourth phase, to be launched in January, start at £180,000.

There have been few resales on earlier sites. "But two people who sold recently did very well indeed. The flats tend to be beautifully done up."

Urban Splash launched the lofts concept in the North West with fitted flats in Manchester and Liverpool. "We take an inner city building and create open plan flats highlighting such features as exposed brick and beams. Our input is modern and contrasting," says project coordinator Fiona Woodward.

"We pitch to first-time buyers who want a modern home and lifestyle in the city centre. It's a different product and its 20 per cent cheaper because we do everything in house and its often grant aided to help people to move back to the city centre. The few that have resold have gone very well."

Lofts in Smithfield Buildings, a former department store in Oldham Street, Manchester start at £40,000.

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December is hosting a property boom around the country. By Rosalind Russell

The result, says Husband, is a

Stuart Leicestershire villages like Woodhouse Eaves are a powerful draw for families moving up from the south. This year, 65 per cent of

new towards the Downs, is partly
leaving and covered by roses and
lematis. Around £215,000
through Edmunds (01273 478828).
The house is set in a Church
and has a very fine view from
the garden. The house has games
room, five bedrooms, four stables,
outdoor garage and four acres of
land with paddocks. Price
£215,000.

	Apr-Jun 96	Jul-Sep 96	Dischhoff	Sum Dischhoff
North			86,673	89,755
North West			85,717	99,603
York & Humber			88,506	89,852
Wales			75,381	77,443
West Midlands			82,822	98,921
West of England			84,564	83,187
Yorkshire			85,717	84,564
East of England			81,717	181,717
East Midlands			87,173	139,473
East of England			82,722	207,722

Apr-Jun 96		Jul-Sep 96		Detached		Semi-Detached		Detached		Semi-Detached		Detached		Semi-Detached	
North	86,673	89,755	49,048	48,993	37,022	38,171	36,768	838,061							
North West	59,717	59,863	51,810	53,439	34,416	35,415	45,059	45,857							
York & Humbers	88,506	89,552	49,987	50,408	36,518	37,013	43,222	43,238							
Wales	76,381	77,443	47,349	46,763	37,140	37,832	40,922	43,128							
Midlands	98,922	98,921	51,701	53,540	40,909	41,583	41,741	40,585							
East of England	54,117	53,187	55,038	46,644	34,965	35,749	33,841	35,717							
London	44,774	44,774	51,109	42,984	44,706	38,204	40,270								
South East	101,266	101,266	50,523	50,485	49,396	48,838	49,959								
South West	139,454	139,454	74,874	58,105	59,248	48,551	48,044								
South & Central	267,742	267,742	118,586	97,591	105,562	87,523	91,186								

Wanastalls Barn at Patrixbourne, near Canterbury in Kent is the joker in the pack. It's a brand new house built to look like a barn conversion, with the authentic double height cart door at the front. The weatherboarded three bedroom house is almost finished, has been built using oak beams and timbers and includes a galleried dining hall. The garden was landscaped before the house was built, grouped around a large pond. £225,000 through Maclean (01233 812060).

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هذه امان الاول

TO FIND OUT WHAT'S ON, AND WHEN TOMORROW READ TODAY'S EYE

Moll Flanders

Moll (Alex Kingston) continues to sleep her way across Merrie England in Andrew Davies' take on Defoe.



West Ham v Man Utd

Goodnight Vienna, hello Upton Park, as Fergie's babes meet the cockney foreign legion.



The Longest Day

Hollywood hits the beaches in the weekend's longest movie. D-Day is Sunday.



An Eye full

Your comprehensive and critical guide to the week's arts, entertainment and TV. Plus, the best Christmas shows and a chat with Jennifer Saunders

The eye



Café society: top chefs Gary and Raymond dish out boil-in-the-bag balderdash to Oxford

Raymond Blanc hopes to start a café society. Dressed in a natty green checked shirt, velvet trousers and waistcoat, he addressed his audience with much confident hand-waving. "Many, many efforts have been done..." he said, his accent alarmingly identical to that of the manager of the French restaurant at the end of my road. A slight unease stirred in me. Perhaps "accent perfection" is a cordon bleu qualification these days and French restaurateurs would naturally say things like "I say, old chap, good show" with the rest of us not for years of training. "...to create zeez café societi," he continued, "in Monsther and in Leeds, and zey ave failed terribly. But in Oxford I sink we can succeed."

He might just be right. For, apart from having the sort of jobs that allow them to take time off on weekday afternoons, there's one thing the residents of this green and educated city are accomplished at. Spouting balderdash in cafés. Having spent the worst of my formative years there, I know. I'm not talking students. Students spout balderdash anywhere they like. Unless, though, they grew up among the dreaming spires, or make their living there, they are mere tyroses in the art. I myself, though I left my loathsome school with little by way of useful A levels, had gained my PhD in balderdash and related gustatory topics by the time I reached the upper sixth.

Le Petit Blanc might just be the perfect setting. Glancing round its white walled and wood-floored interior, with the slidey Japanese-style panels, was a bit like a horrible flashback trip. Memories of the Seventies flooded back: faces had an uneasy edge of familiarity; I



kept thinking I'd spotted teachers and the parents of peers I haven't seen in years, and then remembering that they, too, would have added a bit over a decade and a half to their appearance. I half-expected to bump into my former self.

The odd thing about an Oxford crowd is that, if one glances from the corner of one's eye, the overwhelming impression is of scruffiness. The wealth of colour, of drape, of slip-on shoes and eccentric accessories, hits the casual glance with a gust of fair du jumble sale. With a head-on stare, the illusion wavers and disappears: actually, jackets, shawls, neckerchiefs are all scrupulously

who's ever eaten Cullen Slonk can attest to that, or even that great stand-by, bangers and mash. The fact that only the British will eat it is another question altogether.

The lads, nevertheless, tried to spin the debate out for a comfortable hour, abetted and loosely controlled by the food writer Paul Levy. "I've been in this country," said Raymond, "for 17 years, which certainly makes me a better Frenchman."

I'm not entirely sure what this meant, but the audience liked it. Gary produced a book called *10,000 Years of British Cookery*.

"That's a long time before the French got here," he said. Levy interjected: "Gary, 10,000 years ago people here painted themselves blue." A man at the back stuck his hand up.

"I was watching the telly the other day," he said, "and there was a French chef called something like Cantona on it turned over to the other side." "Ah, now," replied Gary, "I have to say, he's one Frenchman who's really brought something to this country." The bloke contingent applauded. Oh, dear. Cookery and football. It'll be interior design and cricket before we know it.

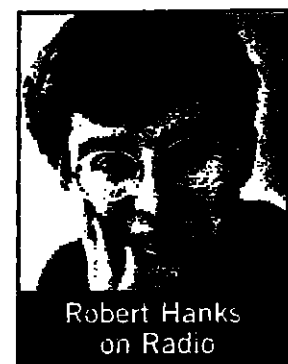
And so it went. Gary and Raymond gamely swapped insults while the occasional cake-scoffer found their feet and proved they hadn't listened to a single preceding word. Such, after all, is the pattern of formal debate. Raymond said "boil" and threw his notes on the floor, while Gary waxed lyrical about clootie dumplings. It's only a shame Marco Pierre White wasn't there. A fist-fight would have just rounded things off nicely. Next week, Rabbi Boteach says that men and women are too different ever to live together. Oh yeah? And what makes him an expert all of a sudden?

Women of London, rejoice

On Thursday morning, while *The Moral Maze* was working itself up into a lather over euthanasia or some such on Radio 4, over on 963 Liberty - London's new medium wave station aimed at women aged 25-44 - Simon Bates was cutting straight to the heart of the most challenging and important ethical issues of today: Dalmatians and cormorants.

Dalmatians took up most of the programme, the question being whether Disney ought to be making a virtual dog commercial like *101 Dalmatians*, thereby, in effect, littering our streets with unwanted spotty puppies for years to come. Still, aside from the woman who warned against unscrupulous breeders who weren't interested in "the good of the breed", this wasn't very interesting.

It was the cormorants that really grabbed my attention. Apparently, anglers have been getting very angry over the havoc these birds have been wreaking on inland fish-stocks in recent years, and *Angling*



Times had published an article advocating the birds' wholesale slaughter, and illustrated it with a picture of a masked man holding a shotgun and surrounded by dead cormorants. Bates, with his unerring instinct for hitting philosophical nails on the head, put the central question to the editor of *Angling Times*: "Isn't this an open invitation to terrorism?" Another rich seam of thought was opened up by the man from *Coarse Fishing* magazine: "These are really sea-birds," he explained, going on to add: "Technically,

they're not allowed to eat freshwater fish." Well yes, but try getting the police to do anything about it; they're just not interested.

To be fair, he presumably didn't exactly mean that - what he wanted to say was that cormorants aren't supposed to eat freshwater fish. All the same, it's a peculiar attitude he's betraying - the assumption that the categories we apply to nature have some sort of *a priori* validity, and if nature doesn't fit into them, then it's nature that's blundered. Incidentally, all the literature on cormorants I've come across seems perfectly happy with the idea of cormorants spending a bit of time inland and snaffling the odd stickleback. Though I suppose you could draw the alternative conclusion that the authors of the *Shell Guide to Birds of the British Isles* ought to be had up for incitement.

Still, the important thing is that Simon Bates is back, one of a battery of big-name presenters hired by Liberty -

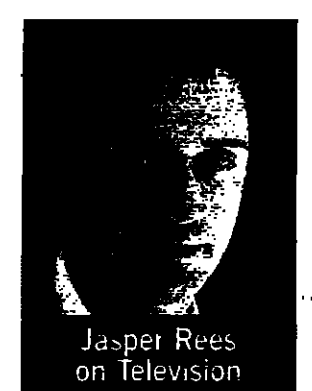
which is what used to be *Liberty*, the hugely incompetent women's radio station (that is, the station was hugely incompetent, not the women). According to Liberty's press officer, the main difference is that Liberty doesn't set out to exclude men the way *Viva!* did (I think this is unfair to *Viva!*, from which most men were perfectly happy to be excluded, owing to the fact that it was crap and you couldn't receive it in large parts of London anyway). Instead, Liberty has simply hired presenters who "traditionally" appeal more to female listeners, which seemingly includes Bates. After his not entirely comfortable stint on London News Radio, it's good to hear him back on blistering form - flattering the listeners ("People of intelligence and sophistication, like you," he keeps on repeating), laughing his strange laugh at his own jokes, and always, always missing the point. Just like the women of London have, I suppose, missed him.

How deep is your access?

It's often said that earth holds no more frontiers. Once cartographers had mapped out Papua New Guinea, the Himalayas and the wilder parts of Essex, the only way for explorers to go was upwards into space, or inwards, inside themselves. Science programmes that film in improbable places are thus taking on the habits of the modern fly-on-the-wall documentary. They brag about depth of penetration to some unphotographed zone as if it's a measure of virility. How deep is your access? Yeah, well mine's deeper.

In a fascinating Equinox (C4, Sun) about the race to facilitate cheap space travel, a bunch of amateur scientists fired a rocket from the American desert into the blue beyond. From the obligatory remote camera attached, it transmitted back pictures of the view. "I can see the curvature of the earth!" screamed one of them, crouched over a tiny monitor. "That's the friggin' earth, man! That is so cool."

Technologically speaking, though, it's only slightly cooler than the invention of the wheel. You can see the curvature of the earth any day of the week, and you don't



have to launch a camera into space to do it. In *Spirit of the Jaguar* (BBC2, Sun), which told of the birth of Central America, a camera glided over a computer-generated image of the earth's surface, showing Caribbean islands across the sea in journeys that in real time took thousands of millions of years. The *Saga of Life* (C4, Sat) tossed in the same virtual reality gimmick, an image of the curved surface of the nascent earth under attack from kamikaze meteors.

Just as we all grew blasé about man on the moon, these days we're frankly pretty unfazed by all those location reports from the copulating

cervix. Now it takes something fairly special to get the viewer to sit up and pay attention. Strapping a camera on to a human sperm, say - now that would be something. Via the microscopic camera work of Lemnart Nilsson, *The Saga of Life* got remarkably adjacent to a pack of human seed, caught in the act of bombarding an egg into submission. As a spectacle - a bunch of high-velocity projectiles ramming headlong into a sphere - it was almost identical to those meteors crashing into earth. Television is the great leveller in this way, exponentially enlarging or reducing images to fit the size of the screen, like a weirdly capable photocopier.

Under the umbrella of its cod-Attenborough title, the programme investigated some of the surprises sprung by the evolutionary process. Did you know, for example, that the dolphin evolved from a big dog who couldn't cut it on land and so went home to the sea. Suddenly it makes sense that dolphins are so content to gambol about with cheap plastic footballs.

Other theories arising from Nilsson's foetal filming were less adapted to clearing the fog. The human embryo in an

early stage of development turns out to be almost indistinguishable from other species: our feet are like pigs' trotters, for example, and we start off with gills. And at the incipient stage there's apparently not much to choose between an arm and a wing. If so, this plays havoc with key cultural signposts, like Henry James's *The Arms of a Dove*, not to mention the pop group Paul McCartney and Arms.

Television has always been eager to accelerate the evolutionary cycle of invasion, cloning and renewal. Comedy, in particular, has produced mutant, inviolated forms like *The Adam and Joe Show* (C4, Fri), in which the jokes are more rewarding the greater your media consumption. There was a visual gag about the shakiness, the wobbly black-and-white cutaway without which the late-night broadcast is incomplete. You wouldn't have got it unless you watch late-night broadcasts like this. One spoof kills a film style stone dead, necessitating the inception of another snappy technique, which will itself be spoofed into extinction. It's called progress.

DAMIEN HURTS...and his painfully creative struggle by Kerber

CAN'T YOU SLEEP DAMIEN? NO. I'M SO WORRIED ABOUT THE EXHIBITION TOMORROW.

I WAS MEANT TO HAVE PRODUCED TEN PIECES OF WORK BUT I THINK I'VE ONLY DONE NINE. IT'S TERRIBLE. I CAN'T SLEEP!

HAVE YOU COUNTED SHEEP? YES, I INCLUDED THAT ONE.

WEATHER

The British Isles

General Situation and 5-Day Outlook:

A ridge of high pressure lying east-west across southern Britain will be slow moving. Depressions will be moving east well to the north. Today, the south and east of Scotland will get some dry, bright weather. However, rain and gusty southwest winds in the north and west will be spreading east. Northern Ireland looks like staying cloudy all day with showery rain and a brisk southwest wind. England and Wales will get patchy fog at first, and many places are likely to stay grey and misty through the day. There will, though, be some bright weather, especially to the north and west. Sunday will again be grey and misty across the southern half of England and Wales. Further north, some rain is likely with a brisk southwest wind. Rain over Scotland and Northern Ireland will give way to brighter weather during Monday while mist and fog over England and Wales clears to some hazy sunshine. The middle of the week should then see quiet weather everywhere with varying amounts of cloud and some sunshine. However, patchy fog and frost will affect many areas in the mornings.

Europe and The World

WORLD WEATHER YESTERDAY, MIDDAY (GMT): c, cloudy; f, rain; fg, fog; rain; sn, snow; s, sunny; th, thunder; previous day's figure at local time.

AA Roadwatch

The Sky at Night

Looking east-southeast at about 11.00pm on Friday 13th December

More meteors can be expected to streak through the right sky this week as the annual Geminid shower builds up to its peak on Friday night (13th). Undoubtedly one of the best reliable showers of the year, the Geminids should produce around 100 shooting stars an hour at maximum under ideal observing conditions. Prospects this year are good. There is no moonlight to interfere, so patient observers even in less well favoured circumstance, should be rewarded. What is more, the constellation Gemini rises at a civilized time early in the evening so there is a good chance of seeing shooting stars before midnight. Their radiant point lies close to Castor, one of the two bright stars in Gemini named after the heavenly twins. Jacqueline Mitton

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Leaving-Landing Times

City	Leaving	Landing
London	3:55pm	7:55am
Bristol	4:05pm	8:05am
Birmingham	3:55pm	8:05am
Manchester	3:55pm	8:12am
Glasgow	3:45pm	8:24am
Belfast	3:55pm	8:33am
Tomorrow	3:55pm	7:55am
London	4:05pm	8:05am
Bristol	3:55pm	8:05am
Birmingham	3:55pm	8:12am
Manchester	3:45pm	8:24am
Glasgow	3:55pm	8:33am
Belfast	3:55pm	8:41am

High Tides

City	AM HT	PM HT
London	10.40	6.1
Liverpool	8.26	8.1
Avonmouth	4.05	10.9
Hull (Albert Dock)	3.04	6.3
Glasgow	10.05	2.1
Dun Laoghaire	8.57	2.11

Sun and Moon

New Moon: December 10

Sun rises 7:52am Moon rises 3:40am

Sun sets 3:52pm Moon sets 12:12pm



The big picture

Ryan's Daughter

Sun 9.20pm BBC2

"Gush made respectable by millions of dollars tastefully wasted" ... "a brilliant enigma" ... David Lean's 1970 love story is a fascinating study in pictorial grandeur over content. It is also a showcase of all Lean's strengths and weaknesses as a director. The Robert Bolt-scripted story has unhappily married Sarah Miles scandalising 1916 Ireland by having an affair with British soldier, Christopher Jones. Robert Mitchum, John Mills and Trevor Howard are the heavyweight support act.

Television preview

Recommended viewing this weekend
by Gerard Gilbert

How would you explain Eddie Izzard to a Dane or an Israeli? A fashionably dressed heterosexual transvestite stand-up comic, with no punchlines but the sweetest half-smile? Oliver Reed's gentle younger brother in a lacy top? Izzard skirted the problem by simply presenting himself on a "world tour", if Tel Aviv, northern Europe and one or two spots on the eastern seaboard of the USA can be said to constitute the world.

One comes away from TX - Je Suis a Stand-Up: Eddie Izzard Abroad (Sat BBC2), Paul Tiekell's record of that tour, more impressed with Izzard's bravery than with his material, much of which is of the "a funny old thing happened to me this morning" variety. Not that the material is the thing with Izzard. As for his bravery, the scene where he launches himself in GSCF-level French at a sophisticated Paris Rive Gauche cabaret audience makes Daniel in the lion's den look like a real bottom-of-the-bill act. A lesser stand-up would have curled up and died. Eddie Izzard curls up and dies in atrocious French, and that winning half-smile - and he's got the St Germain de

Pré crowd eating from his garishly painted fingers.

Thriller writers looking for a plot should turn to Equinox: Superhighway Robbery (Sun C4), a case-history of "cybercrime" (stealing money from banks by tapping into their computer networks). The rewards are huge, the penalties comparatively light - and you need never leave your bedroom. Most of Patrick Forbes's intriguing film is taken up with the case of a Russian hacker who has been stealing wads of money from Citibank without ever leaving a dingy office in the suburbs of St Petersburg. Until, that is, he made an ill-advised shopping trip to London.

Travels with My Camera (Sun C4) sends New York photographer CM Hardt back to her roots in north-western Spain, digging around for the truth about what happened to her grandfather, shot by Franco's police in the late 1930s. He was, it transpires, an underground guerilla fighter who had refused to accept El Caudillo's victory in the Spanish Civil War. "I knew nothing then, and I know nothing now," says her great-grandmother. She is a sprightly 97 years old, so maybe she does know something after all.

Moll Flanders (Sun ITV), meanwhile, is being received into the Catholic faith so that she can marry her third husband. First, though, she has to make a full confession of all her sins, which makes a very handy synopsis of the bawdy so far. I agree with our Thomas Sutcliffe on this one. Those being hyper-critical of ITV hiring Andrew Davies to adapt literary classics should be locked in a room with all 23 episodes of *Heartbeat* - and not allowed out until they have watched every single one of them.

Talking of which, *The Saga of Life* (Sat C4) goes in close on the microscopic creatures which live on our bodies, and is guaranteed to get you scratching within 30 seconds - but a generally weak weekend of television means one can catch up with *American Visions* (Sun BBC2). The good news is that Robert Hughes is still going strong, this week looking at the influence of the mass immigration of the turn-of-the-century on American art and culture. The general attitude of the old Americans to the new can be neatly summarised by a contemporary *New York Times* description of Cubism as "Ellis Island art".



The big match

Barbarians v Australia

Sat 2.35pm, BBC1

The last chance to see one of rugby union's greats on the big stage, as David Campese (above) leads Australia onto the Twickenham turf for what is traditionally a fast, free-flowing match. Rugby as it was meant to be played. While Campese hopes to bow out with a victory, Twickenham's collective memory will be stirred by the sight of one its own greats out of international mothballs, as Rob Andrew leads the Barbarians back line. Get in the tinnies and roll back the years.

Saturday television and radio

BBC 1

- 7.05 The Pink Panther Show (R) (1418281).
7.25 News, Weather (5036533).
7.30 Children's BBC: The Morph Files. 7.40 Ignotov. 7.55 Speed Race. 8.20 The Real Adventures of Jonny Quest.
8.40 The New Adventures of Superman (8734281). *
9.15 Live and Kicking: Phil Collins in the hot seat, Torvill and Dean's top five skating tips, and Danni Minogue with "Electric Circus" (S) (3446358).
12.12 Weather (4579295).
12.15 Grandstand. Introduced by Steve Rider from Twickenham. 12.20 Football Focus. 1.00 News. 1.05 Racing from Cheltenham. The 1.15 Tiffin Toppers Handicap Hurdle. 1.25 Ice Skating: Torvill and Dean. 1.40 Racing from Cheltenham. The 1.45 Jack Brown Bookmaker Handicap Chase. 2.00 Rugby Union Preview. 2.10 Racing from Cheltenham. The 2.20 Rehearsal Chase. Grand National winner Rough Guest clashes with last season's top novice Mr Mulligan. 2.35 Rugby Union: Barbarians v Australia. Live coverage from Twickenham (kick-off 3.00). See the big match. 4.40 Final Score (S) (44492574).
5.15 News, Weather (5489129). *
5.25 Regional News and Weather (6253842).
5.30 The Simpsons. Homer and Bart take a camping trip in the wilderness (S) (681552). *
5.55 Jim Davidson's Generation Game. Contestants perform an extract from the musical *Grease*, among other jollies (S) (312126). *
6.55 Noel's House Party. Jenny Hull is set up, Barbara Windsor rings the doorbell, and Celine Dion sings her latest single (S) (615668).
7.50 The National Lottery. The Spice Girls perform their Christmas single (S) (952623).
8.05 Casualty. The way that Matt has been making eyes at Jude in recent episodes, a romantic storyline seems in the offing. Meanwhile, a woman is pulled out of the river following a vicious assault (S) (944668). *
8.55 News and Sport, Weather (Followed by National Lottery Update) (578736). *
9.15 Web of Deceit (Sander Stern 1990 US). Generic title for a generic thriller about a hotshot lawyer (Linda Purl) called back to her home town of Atlanta to defend a teenage drifter charged with rape and murder. But she falls for the opposing counsel, an old flame, and the hell to a wealthy local family. ... Oooh, goosh, goosh (S) (253649). *
10.45 Match of the Day. The clash between Premiership leaders Arsenal and Derby County is the main event. Plus, the Goal of the Month (S) (7939303).
12.00 The Stand-Up Show. A big hand, please, for Rhona Carrington, Al Murray, John Mulaney and Sean Lock. (R) (1418281).
12.30 Top of the Pops. From last night (R) (S) (83330).
1.00 The Indigo Girls in Concert. Georgia's singer/songwriting folksters recorded live at the Shepherd's Bush Empire, London (S) (3171392).
1.50 Weather (8440555). To 1.55am.

BBC 2

- 7.15 The Saint in Palm Springs (Jack Hively 1941 US). The debonair crimefighter on the trail of some stolen postage stamps (8758668).
8.20 Open University: Palazzo Venezia, Rome: a Cardinal's Palace (7176552). 8.45 The Chemistry of Power (6107484). 9.10 Persisting Dreams: Byron and the Romantics (5519194).
10.00 Chanaia. Indian historical epic (S) (2335303).
10.35 Network East (S) (5539649).
11.20 Q Asia. Quiz show (S) (7977262).
11.50 Film 96 with Barry Norman (S) (9446216). *
12.20 Carefree (Mark Sandrich 1938 US). Despite the title, this is one of the least effective of the Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers RKO musicals, with too much plot and horrible country club decor. Fred plays a psychiatrist sent Ginger, a dancer, by best pal Ralph Bellamy, who wants Fred to persuade Ginger that she is in love with him, Ralph. The hypnotic "Change Partners" dance, with Ginger in a trance, is a high point (4607939).
1.40 Hostile Witness (Ray Milland 1968 UK). Milland directed himself as a barrister out to avenge the hit-and-run death of his daughter (48127991).
3.20 Bugs in the Afternoon (Roy Rowland 1952 US). Ray Milland again, this time as a cavalryman relocating in the Wild West after being dismissed for striking a fellow officer (3385620).
4.45 TOTP 2 (S) (1138991).
5.30 Amelia Earhart: The Final Flight (Yves Simoneau 1994 US). Diane Keaton plays the aviatrix, losing radio contact over the Pacific in July 1937. Bruce Dern and Rutger Hauer are among the impressive supporting cast (14842).
7.00 News and Sport, Weather (210571).
7.15 Assignment: Reporter David Lynn follows five students and their teacher on the journey from Peshawar to the front-line in Afghanistan to bring the Taliban - the Islamic student army (S) (480668). *
8.00 What the Papers Say. With Dorothy Grace-Elder of the Express (S) (592007).
8.10 Women of Country. Tammy Wynette, Dolly Parton, Loretta Lynn... that sort of country (982823). *
9.00 Have I Got News for You (S) (9910). *
9.30 Je Suis a Stand-Up: Eddie Izzard Abroad. See Preview, above (S) (560755). *
10.20 Crucial Tales. "Spiders and Flies" (S) (957179).
10.50 Later with Jools Holland. Sting, Tricky and Lionel Richie perform in the round (S) (403281).
11.50 Cadillac Man (Roger Donaldson 1990 US). Robin Williams plays a phlegmatic car salesman being held hostage by a crazed husband, Tim Robbins. You either like Robin Williams and this isn't one of his best, or you don't (S) (751533). *
1.25 June Night (Ingmar Bergman 1940 Swe). Ingrid Bergman's last film in Sweden, before decamping to Hollywood finds her chemist scandalising a small town by romancing a sailor (Followed by Westview) (286048). To 3.05am.
REGIONS. Wales: 6.00pm Dad's Army. 6.30 Sykes.

ITV/London

- 6.00 GMTV 6.00 News. 6.10 Mole in the Hole. 6.30 Professor Bubble. 6.50 Bug Alert! 7.10 Disney's Wake Up in the Wild Room. 8.20 Gargoyles. Special: a double episode of (7058113).
9.25 Wow. ITV's answer to *Live and Kicking*, with Simeon Courtie and Sophie Aldred (36041571).
11.00 The Noise. Boyzone perform their new single and there's a golden oldie from East 17 (S) (6200).
11.30 The Chart Show (S) (97303).
12.30 Champions of the Future (S) (52533).
1.00 News and Weather (82306378). *
1.05 Local News, Weather (82306649). *
1.10 Movies, Games and Videos (9605769).
1.45 The Making of 101 Dalmatians. Rik Mayall narrates a behind-the-scenes look at the new five-action Disney movie (5581129).
2.20 The Captain's Table (Jack Lee 1960 UK). Adapted from a Richard Gordon novel, John Gregson plays a bluff cargo skipper upgraded to the wheel of a luxury ocean liner and having problems adjusting his salty sea-dog manner. Peggy Cummins, Donald Sinden and Richard Wattis provide familiar support (7790194).
3.50 Film Cop (S) (8852424).
4.45 News, Sports Results, Weather (8914552). *
5.05 London Tonight, Sports Results (Followed by LWT Weather) (8008026). *
5.20 Cartoon Time (6230991).
5.30 Sabrina, the Teenage Witch. Sabrina accidentally puts a spell on a baby (533). *
6.00 Gladiators (S) (40552). *
7.00 Blind Date (S) (5823). *
8.00 Family Fortunes (Including Lottery Result) (S) (3991). *
8.30 News, Weather, Lottery Result (Followed by LWT Weather) (84645). *
8.45 Sister Act (Emile Ardolino 1992 US). This huge cinema hit is a decent enough comedy in its way, with most of the entry being provided by Whoopi Goldberg as a streetwise singer who witnesses a murder and goes undercover as a nun. Maggie Smith, as her Mother Superior, provides an acerbic comic foil, but is hardly stretched, while the same could be said of Harvey Keitel as her murderous former lover (S) (43442216). *
10.35 A Killer Among Us (Peter Levin 1990 US). A woman juror on a seemingly open-and-shut murder case is not convinced that the defendant murdered his wife. So what does she do? As the rest of the jury become settled upon a unanimous verdict, she goes sleuthing (65197378). *
12.30 Funny Business (S) (9878514).
1.05 Tropical Heat. Detective drama (S) (3189311).
2.00 The Chart Show (R) (S) (9034408).
2.05 E! News Review (86751).
3.40 G's Girl (R) (9085327).
3.40 TV Sport Classics II (79067021).
4.55 Night Shift (R) (S) (56412427).
5.05 Coach (R) (S) (860359).
5.30 News (67345). To 6.00am.

Channel 4

- 6.00 Sesame Street (11736).
7.00 The Magic School Bus (46823).
7.30 Really Wild Animals (1379668).
7.55 Hong Kong Phooey (4354736).
8.05 King Arthur and the Knights of Justice (7536194).
8.35 Hang Time (6103668).
9.00 The Morning Line (44552).
10.00 Gazzetta Football Italia (54842).
11.00 Biff! (S) (41378).
12.00 Sign On (S) (84084).
12.30 Inside the Vatican. Peter Ustinov says Hello! to the pope (S) (S) (9301674). *
1.20 Son for Sail. A man presents his son with a bill for bringing him up (R) (58377823).
1.45 Racing from Sandown, Wolverhampton and Puncethorn. From Sandown: The 1.55 Thames Valley Eggs Novices' Handicap Hurdle, 2.30 Mitsubishi Shogun Tingle Creek Trophy Chase, 3.05 William Hill Handicap Hurdle, and the 3.40 Doug Barrott Handicap Hurdle. From Wolverhampton: The 2.45 Tote Mobile Terminal Handicap Stakes, and the 3.20 Bass Wulfrun Stakes. From Puncethorn: The 2.05 MML Stockbrokers Puncethorn Chase (48888378).
4.05 For the Love of the Leader. Repeat Witness film profiling the Jamahiriyan Guard, the elite group of all-female bodyguards of Colonel Gaddafi. The programme examines the bizarre personality cult surrounding the Libyan leader and how the place of women in the country's society is defined by his ambiguous moods (R) (S) (1254668). *
5.05 Brookside Omnibus (S) (4389552). *
6.30 Night to Reply (S) (668). *
7.00 News Summary and Weather (485303).
7.10 A Week in Politics. With Vincent Hanna and Andrew Rawnsley (S) (207823).
8.00 The Saga of Life. Meet the microscopic organisms living on your skin. See Preview, above (S) (2113). *
9.00 ER. US medical drama. Ross has a potentially embarrassing encounter with a group of Catholic schoolgirls (R) (S) (996133). *
9.55 Jo Brand Through the Coalhole (R) (S) (909674).
10.25 NYPD Blue (S) (501262). *
11.25 Myra Breckinridge (Mike Samuels 1970 US). Time to reappraise this critically-murdered adaptation of Gore Vidal's tale of a transsexual writer getting ahead in Hollywood. With Rachel Welch, in the title role, Mae West - making her (brief) movie comeback after 26 years - John Huston (excellent) and Farrah Fawcett (360910).
1.10 Late Licence: Manga (S) (3184866).
2.05 The New Twilight Zone. Danny Kaye plays an ageing man who keeps the world's final hour in a magical clock (S) (6887155).
2.35 United States of Television. Laura Knightlinger travels through gossip, game shows and children's programmes on American TV (R) (S) (1853311).
3.20 Mr Don and Mr George (R) (67074243).
3.50 The Real World (8767311). To 4.45am.

ITV/Regions

- ANGLIA
As London except 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos (32533). 1.10 The Making of 101 Dalmatians (3041026). 1.40 Summertime (21427378). 2.10 Airwolf (6666736). 3.10 Baywatch (6337264). 3.10am ITV at the Phoenix Festival (16418205). 3.15am Film: Children of Chance (5874232). 4.00am Sound Bites (69574953). 5.00-5.30am World of Selling (15514).
- CENTRAL
As London except 12.30pm Premier (26333). 1.10 Cartoon Time (99885552). 1.25 Dinosaurs (30400910). 1.55 Eastern Max (21418205). 2.25 Movies, Games and Videos (65311789). 2.55 Film: My Town (7044571). 3.50 Airwolf (6666736). 5.10 Goats Extra (5302026). 3.40am Johnnie (1121717). 5.20-5.30am Asian Eye (1114156).
- ITV
As London except 12.30pm West. Movies, Games and Videos (32533). Wales: California Off Beat (9198755). 1.25 Wales: Rugby 2000 (9198755). 1.10 West: Airwolf (9846804). Wales: The Electric Chair (3041026). 1.40 Wales: Movies, Games and Videos (65311789). 2.00 West: Cartoon Time (70497007). 2.10 Film: Disney's The Island at the Top of the World (777129). 3.50 Knight Rider (9855842). 12.30am ITV at the Phoenix Festival (16418205). 3.15am Film: Children of Chance (5874232). 4.00am Sound Bites (69574953). 5.00-5.30am World of Selling (15514).
- MERIDIAN
As London except 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos (32533). 1.10 Touring Cars (3041026). 1.40 Beach Volleyball (21427378). 2.10 Sailing (8467561). 2.40 Warner Cartoon (324842). 3.10 Airwolf (7045002). 3.45 Summertime (193264). 4.15 World of Wonder (618129). 12.30am ITV at the Phoenix Festival (16418205). 3.15am Film: Children of Chance (5874232). 4.00am Sound Bites (69574953). 5.00-5.30am Friesen (15514).
- WESTCOUNTRY
As London except 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos (32533). 1.10 Ensign (9605769). 1.45 Wanted Dead or Alive (5581129). 2.00 Dinosaurs (65161226). 2.55 Airwolf (9846804). 3.50 Thunder in Paradise (9855842). 12.30am ITV at the Phoenix Festival (16418205). 3.15am Film: Children of Chance (5874232). 4.00am Sound Bites (69574953). 5.00-5.30am World of Selling (15514).
- S4
As C4 except 10.00am Ricki Lake (22736). 10.30am American Cavalcade (11562). 12.30pm The West (65303). 1.00am The West (65303). 1.20 A Son for Sail (58377823). 4.05 A Dog's World (254668). 6.30 The Real Holiday Show (668). 7.00 News (212939). 7.15 Nelson Laven (3110587). 8.20 The Scales (684945). 8.50 Let's Get It On (211007). 9.25 Film: Larceny to Kill (4605738). 11.15 The Lloyds Bank Film Challenge (4653781). 1.10am News (3480175). 2.10-2.40am The New Twilight Zone (5160394).

Radio

Radio 1

9.54am News
7.00am Kevin Granning 10.00
Dave Pearce 1.00 Radio 1 Roadshow 2.00 Jo White 4.00 John Peel 7.00 Danny Rampling Lovegrove Dance Party 9.00 Radio 1 Rap Show 12.00 Radio 1 Reggae Dancehall Nite 2.00 Essential Mix 4.00-7.00am Charlie Jordan

Radio 2

6.00am Mo Dutta 8.05 Brian Matthews 10.00 Steve Wright 1.00 Arthur Smith's Amazing Hires 1.30 Smith and Jones Sound Off 2.00 Judi Squire 4.00 Nick Barclough 5.00 Reading Music 6.00 Dine Straits in Concert 7.00 I Write the Songs 7.30 Who Could Ask for Anything More 9.30 David Jacobs 10.00 Everybody Down: A Tribute to Jon Pertwee 12.05 Charlie News 4.00-6.00am Mo Dutta

Radio 3

7.00am Record Review, 8.45 An Advent Calendar, 9.00 Building a Library: Stephen Walsh compares available recordings of Bart's Wozzeck, 10.15 Record Release: Bach, Concerto in A minor for Four Harpsichords, BWV1055, vinyl!; Norma: Cello Concerto in G minor, Tchaikovsky, Christmas Cantata: Der Herr hat Offenbart, 11.15 Resonance: Stephen Johnson reports on two sets of historical Bruckner symphony recordings, one from EMI and the other from Tahra, 12.00 Private Passions: Michael Berkeley is joined by Malcolm Bradbury. See Choice, above, 1.00 News, Vintage Years: Annette Morreau investigates the life and recordings of Austrian cellist Emanuel Feuermann, 3.00 The BBC Orchestras: Gershwin, Piano Concerto, Southern: Symphony No 5 in C minor, 4.15 A Capella Portuguesa: Owen Rees introduces the vocal ensemble in music by and attributed to Cristobal de Morales. Mass: Homage to Anne, Two Motets: Tanneghem: O Crux Ave, Spes Unica, 5.00 Jazz Record Requests, With Geoffrey Smith, 5.45 Music Matters: Ivan Hewitt reports on a new book revealing the secret life of choreographer Frederick Ashton; visits



Choice

Speaking Volumes (10.15pm R3) looks at evolution - Kevin Jackson talks to scientific populariser, Stephen Jay Gould. Victims of the struggle for survival crop up in Top Gear's study of Eastern-bloc automobiles (11.05am R5). Survival of the spirit of place is discussed by Malcolm Bradbury (6pm) in Private Passions (12noon R3)

the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts at the end of its first term and leads a discussion on the trend for "holistic minimalism" in music. 6.30 Gluck's Armide. The heroic drama completed by Gluck in 1777, based on the story of the sorcerer Armide and the crusader knight Rinaldo, in a new production which opened the season at La Scala, Milan. 10.15 Speaking Volumes. Kevin Jackson talks to acclaimed science writer Stephen Jay Gould about his new book *Life's Grandeur*, and discusses a selection of recent writings on evolution. Plus novelist Robert Irwin turns from science to society as he delves into medieval magical handbooks. See Choice, above. 10.45 Impressions. Brian Morton introduces a specially recorded session by guitarist Mike Walker and his band. 12.30 Misteriosa. Ian Carr looks back to 1958, the year in which Thelma Houston formed a new quartet and recorded an album at the Five Spot Cafe. (6pm). 1.00 Through the Night. With Donald Macleod. 6.00-7.00am Sequence.

Radio 4

6.24am BBC News, 6.30am BBC News Briefing, 6.10 Farming Today, 6.50 Prayer for the Day, 6.55 Weather, 7.00 Today, 8.55 Weather, 9.05 Sport on 4, 9.30 Breakaway, 10.00 News: Loose Ends, 11.00 News: The Week in Westminster: With Donat MacIntyre of the Independent, 11.30 EuroFile, 12.00 Money Box.

12.25 I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue. 12.55 Weather. 1.00 News. 1.10 Any Questions? 1.55 Shipping Forecast. 2.00 News: Any Answers? 2.30 Saturday Playhouse: Crowned with Kerchief and Whiskers. Royce Rymon set in Queen Mary's private drawing room at Marlborough House, London, in 1936. She is still the queen, because her eldest son, King Edward VIII, as yet has no wife. 4.00 News. Professor Christopher Andrew looks behind the scenes as a variety of historians go about their work. 4.30 Science Now. Peter Evans discovers what makes mathematicians tick. 5.00 Film on 4. 5.40 In Celebration. 38 cans of Spam are consumed every second in North America. Addicts of the tinned meat pay tribute. 5.50 Shipping Forecast. 5.55 Weather. 6.00 Six O'Clock News. 6.25 Week Ending. 6.50 All about Eve. Lorelei King chats to the women who inspire her about the women who inspire them, with guests including Stephanie Calman, Maria McElane and Andrea Stuart. 7.30 Kaleidoscope Feature. David Owen Morris examines the world of the accompanist, the musician most closely involved with the star soloist, and discovers what they think of their partners in concert. 7.50 On These Days. 8.50 Saturday Night Theatre: A Warning for All Saints. The undead are unleashed in H S Poles's tale of revenge set amongst the wood-panelled corridors of Oxbridge. (3pm). 9.25 Classics with Kay. 9.50 Ten to Ten. 9.59 Weather. 10.00 News. 10.15 I Am a Donut. By Mike

Bradwell. Ricky Fisher has been given the task of teaching former East German Communists how to be Western-style capitalists, but he is disappointed to encounter a people with their own infinite cultural values. (12). 11.15 Kiri. Dame Kiri Te Kanawa talks to Jane Knox-Mawer about her life and her music. (14). 11.45 Uncle Morts. Celia Fringe. By Peter Timmiswood. Carter Brandon takes his blood-red Beetle to Wales, and with him goes his Uncle Mort. (15). 12.00 News. 12.30 Late Story: Will You Marry Me? By Richard Brown. 12.48 Shipping Forecast. 1.00-6.00am As World Service.

Radio 5

6.05am Early Talkback 6.30 Brian Hayes at Breakfast 9.05 Weekend with Kerchief and Whiskers. 11.05 Top Gear. See Choice, above. 11.35 Hold the Front Page. 12.05 Baker and Kelly Upfront. 1.05 Sport on Five 6.06 Six O'Clock News. 7.30 The Hourly 9.35 Daily UK. 10.05 Brief News 10.35 World Up. 11.00 Night Extra 12.05 Night Talk 2.00 Up All Night 5.00-6.00am Morning Reports

Classic FM

10.05-10.15am BBC News. 6.00am Sarah Lucas 9.00 Classic Countdown 12.00 Classic Garden. 1.00 Alan Menz 4.00 Nick Bailey 7.00 Russian Revolution 8.00 Evening Concert. Carl Reinhold: Sextet in B flat. Glinnik: Septet in E flat. Beethoven: Octet in E flat. Mendelssohn: Octet in E flat. 10.00 The Classic Quiz 12.00 Andre Leon 4.00 The Travel Guide 5.00-6.00am Michael Fanslow.

Virgin Radio

0215 1371280. 10.00am News. 6.00am Janet Lee Grace 8.00 Russ and Jones's Greatest Hits 10.00 Jeremy Clark 2.00 Mark Forster 6.00 Lynn Parsons 10.00 Robin Banks 2.00-6.00am Howard Pearce

World Service

0950 1.00am Newsdesk 1.30 Quota. Unquote 2.00 Newsday 2.30 People & Politics 3.00 News 3.15 Sports Roundup 3.30 Music Review 4.00 Newsdesk 4.30 Short Story 4.45 On the Edge 5.00 Newsday 5.30-6.00am Weekend

Satellite

SAT 1

7.00am My Little Pony (8320991). 7.25 Dynamo Duck (6783216). 7.30 Dolly and His Friends (85736). 8.00 Oson and Olivia (52823). 8.30 Free Willy (51194). 9.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 10.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 10.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 11.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 11.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 12.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 12.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 1.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 1.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 2.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 2.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 3.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 3.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 4.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 4.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 5.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 5.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 6.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 6.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 7.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 7.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 8.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 8.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 9.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 9.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 10.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 10.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 11.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 11.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 12.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 12.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 1.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 1.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 2.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 2.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 3.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 3.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 4.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 4.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 5.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 5.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 6.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 6.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 7.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 7.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 8.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 8.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 9.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 9.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 10.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 10.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 11.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 11.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 12.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 12.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 1.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 1.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 2.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 2.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 3.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 3.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 4.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 4.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 5.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 5.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 6.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 6.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 7.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 7.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 8.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 8.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 9.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 9.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 10.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 10.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 11.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 11.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 12.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 12.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 1.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 1.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 2.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 2.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 3.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 3.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 4.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 4.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 5.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 5.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 6.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 6.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 7.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 7.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 8.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 8.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 9.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 9.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 10.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 10.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 11.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 11.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 12.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 12.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 1.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 1.30 The Best of Sally (87767). 2.00 The Best of Sally (87767). 2.30 The Best of Sally (87767).

the Russian capital throws a rainbow cloak over the grim buildings left by the Soviet regime

Moscow's mayor aims to paint the town red, green and purple

Helen Womack
Moscow

In preparation for Moscow's 850th anniversary next year, the city's dynamic mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, has ordered "Operation Bright Facade", a campaign to paint the drab buildings of the Russian capital all the colours of the rainbow.

Among the buildings due to receive the Luzhkov treatment, according to the daily *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, is the famous House on the Embankment. The grey constructivist monster was built for top Bolshevik leaders but gradually emptied in the Thirties as Stalin's secret police arrived night after night to drag the residents away to labour camp. Now it houses rich Russian and foreign tenants.

The newspaper did not say what colour had been chosen for the grim building but the cost of its redecoration alone would be one billion roubles or 180,000 dollars, it said.

In Soviet times, the Kremlin, with its red walls and golden-domed cathedrals inside, provided virtually the only colour in Moscow. Mr Luzhkov, a prac-

tical and energetic politician, has already done much to brighten up the city, restoring the Christ the Saviour Cathedral which was demolished under Stalin, renovating the zoo and opening new shopping complexes. On Manege Square, just under the Kremlin wall, a huge new mall is being built. Already fountains and sculptures depicting scenes from Russian fairy tales are drawing the crowds.

Conservationists may dislike Mr Luzhkov but he is generally popular among Muscovites, who returned him with a resounding vote of confidence in city elections earlier this year. He is tipped as a possible successor to President Boris Yeltsin.

Apart from the efforts of Mr Luzhkov, capitalism itself is helping to make Moscow a more cheerful city. Neon now lights up the winter sky and advertising bill boards make more amusing reading than the Communist slogans of the past. Lately, Muscovites have been puzzled by giant pictures of a young woman and the message "I love you". What was this selling? It turned out that a rich



Merry Moscow: How Russia's depressing grey capital might look after its promised makeover

Photomontage: Jonathan Anstee

Language of colour makes *krasna devitsa* a beautiful girl, not a scarlet woman

Christopher Bellamy

Bright colours sparkle throughout the Russian language and literature – a necessary antidote, perhaps, to the steely skies, the mud and months of sub-zero winter cold and snow. Many have a symbolic, even mystical significance dating back to the Dark Ages.

Red Square – *Krasnaya Ploshchad* – was called that hundreds of years before communism, and probably means "beautiful" or "shining square", in spite of the red brick walls of the Kremlin citadel which have been there since an Italian architect designed them 500 years ago.

Krasny – "red" – and *krasiv* – "beautiful" – in modern Russian share a common old Slavonic root. In ancient Russian folklore the heroine was always *krasna devitsa* – which, scholars insist, means "beautiful girl" and not "scarlet woman". The same word

krasno in Serbian (or in Bosnian or Croat) means "shining" or, by transfer, "wonderful". And *krasny* survives in its original meaning in both Serbian and modern Russian in *prekrasny* – which also means "wonderful".

"Red" as a colour associated with the political left wing goes back to the French Revolution. It appears in that context long before the Russian Revolution in the literature of Turgenev, according to Ig Avsey of the University of Westminster's Russian department who has recently published translations of Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* and *Village of Stepanchikovo*.

Other colours also have symbolic meanings, though it is hard to pin down where they came from. The Tartar-Mongols, who ruled Russia for more than two centuries, called the newly independent Russian Tsar in the late 15th century the "White Khan" – because, in

the Mongol world view, white was the colour of the West. In more recent times, "white" became the colour of the political right. The "White Guard" – the counter-revolutionaries after 1917, for example. And the extreme right, or anyone associated with the disintegration of the Russian Empire, may be called "black" – the "black hundreds" of 1905-1907, for example.

Even more recently, other colours have acquired symbolic meanings. In the Russian language, "dark blue" – *sin* – and "light blue" – *goluboy*, related to *golub*, a dove, are different colours. *Goluboy* is slang for "gay". Popular legend has it that this derives from the shoulder straps in light or bright blue (the hue of the Piccadilly underground line in London) worn by the secret police – the NKVD or KGB. But, as any Russian linguist will tell you, Russian etymology is an inexact science.

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obituaries / gazette

Maria Casarès

Maria Casarès was the outstanding French tragic actress of her generation. She was born in Spain but, because of enforced exile at the end of the Spanish Civil War, her career was entirely on the French stage and screen.

Unlike her seniors Edwige Fenech and Madeleine Renaud, she brought an atavistic and foreboding sense of tragic destiny to her performances that made her unsuitable for comedy and the lighter theatre. She carried on the tradition of Sarah Bernhardt in performing the great roles of Greek tragedy and of the French classical theatre, Phèdre being one of her finest performances, but she also played a multiplicity of parts in plays by Ibsen and early moderns and by contemporary playwrights including Brecht, Genet, Anouilh, Sartre, Camus, Claudel and Edward Bond among others.

She introduced J.M. Synge to the French public with a legendary production of *Deirdre of the Sorrows* in 1942 under the German occupation and shortly afterwards made her screen debut as Dubouche's wife Nathalie in Marcel Carné's great film *Les Enfants du Paradis* (1943). She was 21 at the time.

Although she made many films and her electrifying presence, with its dark beauty, innate smouldering passion and controlled violence – and most forgettably of all her expressive eyes – made her an instant star, ideally suited to the cinema, she was happier and more at home in the theatre.

No one could portray evil, especially evil destiny, better than she – Medea and Lady Macbeth were only two of the parts that gave her such opportunities – but she is well remembered, and still can be seen, in Jean Cocteau's classic films, *Orphée* (1949) and *Le Testament d'Orphée* (1959), where she played Death.

The timeless quality of her mythological roles was unique. She was an actress of great intelligence and her autobiography, *Résidence Privée* (referring to the words on her French identity card), published in 1980, testifies to her intellectual breadth, political commitment and literary skill. Like Proust she was able to bring her past, especially her early Spanish experiences, into the present, through an association of objects, places, people and allusions, so that her book is a series of fragments linked by memory.

Her knowledge and sense of history helped her to understand the events and motivations that lay behind so many of the roles she played, and she became a real avatar of her characters on stage and screen. During the Spanish Civil War she had been, at the age of 14, a voluntary nurse in Madrid hospitals, working to exhaustion tending the wounded, aware of real tragedy hourly before her eyes, and of the particularly Spanish stoic courage and morbid humour displayed by the suffering and dying Republican defenders of the city. Her father, Santiago Casarès Quiroga, was a member of the Republican government, and in 1936 he and the whole family just managed to flee to France before the border was closed.

The next six years were difficult for the family, staying in cheap hotels with little money, but Maria Casarès learned French and on her 20th birthday, in the Théâtre des Mathurins, she opened in *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, her first part, to immediate fame; and thereafter never looked back.

Her incredible eyes, that could express anger, scorn, hatred or the menace of eternity, but also love and incandescent passion, her noble bearing, which made her so suitable for the great female dramatic parts, and her deep expressive voice

attracted all the major playwrights of the day, and she was in constant demand both for modern plays and by the great state-funded drama companies, the Comédie-Française and Jean Vilar's Théâtre National Populaire (TNP), to play the classics. She was with the former company from 1952 to 1954, and opened the first seasons of the Avignon Festival with Vilar, which introduced her to many Shakespeare parts.

She subsequently joined the TNP, where she starred with Gérard Philipe in *Le Cid* and in many other plays, touring America and Europe as well as playing in Paris. She appeared many times with the Renaud-Barrault company in their seasons at the Odéon and, during Jean-Louis Barrault's later odysseys in improvised theatrical spaces, after de Gaulle removed the subsidy in 1968.

Maria Casarès was a private person who liked to return to her house in the country, in Brittany, to prepare her parts, think and read. She married another actor, "Dadé" Schlessler, in 1978, with whom she had played together on the stage for many years, especially at the TNP, where he was only junior to Vilar; he was an Alsatian of gypsy origin. His sardonic sense of humour – during the Second World War he was imprisoned for five days for saying to a German officer with a straight face that he had never heard of Adolf Hitler – and philosophical bent exactly matched her own, and he became the companion of her later years. She was on the stage until only a few months before her death.

John Calder

Maria Casarès, actress: born La Coruña, Spain 21 November 1922; married 1978 Dadé Schlessler; died La Rochelle, France 22 November 1996.



Smouldering passion and controlled violence: Casarès in 1963

Photograph: Hulton Getty

Dame Penelope Jessel

Few of the thousands of people who came into contact with Penelope Jessel in her varied political, educational and charitable activities knew much about her personally, other than that she was elegant, amusing and seemingly possessed a boundless energy. She was far too passionate about issues and other people to waste time talking about herself. Yet her life was the stuff of fiction, part Anthony Trollope, part Evelyn Waugh.

Her social and political concerns took her to many places where there was deprivation or conflict, be it the East End of London during the Second World War, or the West Bank at the time of the Palestinian intifada. In her sixties and early seventies, when most ladies in possession of a chocolate-box cottage in an English country village would have chosen to stay put there, she was still relentlessly travelling, sleeping out under the stars with the Polisario women of the western Sahara, or sitting in a mud hut in a remote part of south-east Angola, while Jonas Savimbi's rebel commanders tried to persuade her that they were



Jessel: 'like a jolly and elder sister of Pussy Galore'

really Liberal Democrats at heart.

Penelope was the third of the five children of the fine but extremely difficult Oxford bookseller and publisher Sir Basil Blackwell. As a girl, Penny would have no major stake in the family business, though having an elder brother at the Dragon School in Oxford meant that she was able to go there. Following a spell at St

Leonard's girls' boarding school in St Andrews she went up to Somerville College, Oxford, to read Greats; academically brilliant and beautiful, she seemed doubly blessed.

The Second World War broke out, and she joined the ATS. Then in 1940, at the age of 20, she married Robert Jessel whom she had met at Oxford. There was bitter opposition from her father, partly

because the Jessels were of Manchester Jewish immigrant stock – though in fact Robert's father, a doctor, had married out of and abandoned his faith.

Bobbie Jessel went on to become Defence Correspondent of the *Times*. But the couple's happiness was relatively short-lived. He died of leukaemia in 1954, leaving Penelope a young widow with two young sons to care for – Stephen and David, both later journalists. She responded to the challenge by acquiring qualifications that enabled her to become an adult education lecturer in social administration and social work, notably at Plater College in Oxford.

Unlike many professionals in those fields, she did not become an ardent Labour supporter. Instead, inspired by Jo Grimond's vision of a Liberal revival, she joined the Liberal Party and carried its banner in half a dozen parliamentary elections in the 1960s and early 1970s, in various hopeless seats.

She fought the May 1965 by-election in Birmingham Hall Green, operating out of a poky caravan. The contest was uninspiring and low-key, but Penelope added colour to it, the *Times* reported, by looking "like a jolly and elder sister of Pussy Galore". The young Peter Preston, writing in the *Guardian*, declared that she was "one of the most adroit and charming canvassers extant". It was all to no avail; the Conservative cruised comfortably to victory, though Penny Jessel did avoid the classic third party squeeze.

Denied the opportunity of serving in the House of Commons, she devoted herself to working both inside and outside the Liberal Party on women's issues and international affairs. From 1985 to 1988 she was the party's International Officer (unpaid), having already become a familiar figure at Liberal International Congresses. She was hurt by the way she was eased out of that position, to make way for a younger (paid) person. But she had the consolation of being made a Dame in 1987, to mark the centenary of the Women's Liberal Federation. Had the Liberals had a more generous allocation of peerages, she would have had a strong claim to one of those.

Jessel listed among her recreations looking at churches and

gardens. The reality behind those innocent-sounding occupations was years of fierce campaigning on conservation matters, especially in Oxfordshire; she was a tenacious fighter and a ferocious letter-writer when the subject was dear to her heart.

She was also a chain-smoker of formidable proportions. Eating in restaurants where she became a battle of wits to see if one could eat slowly enough to prevent her lighting up between all the courses.

She bore the cancer that killed her with immense dignity and carried on her voluntary work, mainly for the Liberal Institute, right up until her death.

Jonathan Fryer

Penelope Blackwell, political activist and lecturer: born Oxford 2 January 1920; President, Women's Liberal Federation 1970-72; International Officer, Liberal Party 1985-88; DBE 1987; married 1940 Robert Jessel (died 1954; two sons); died Cassington, Oxfordshire 2 December 1996.

Margaret Pollard

"Every tradition was once an innovation and every antique a red-hot artefact," Margaret Pollard wrote in 1947, in *Cornwall*, her book about her adoptive area. Linking the past and the present was very much part of her life; she was born in 1903, and her life spanned vast material changes and shifts in attitude.

Illustrated by Sven Berlin, *Cornwall* remains a period piece of post-war Cornwall, before massive changes destroyed its idiosyncratic past. Humorous, perceptive, and intelligent, it crystallised that period, though her conclusions on the value of identity and difference are still relevant. It is dedicated to the Bishop of Truro, Dr J.W. Hankin, for whom Pollard had worked as secretary. She ends the book with an exhortation: "Be faithful by nature Kernewek" – "Be forever Cornish".

In 1938, Pollard had become a Cornish-language bard, a member of the Cornish Gorsedd, who gather to celebrate the culture of Cornwall and act to protect its linguistic and cultural traditions. She took the name Arlothes Ywerdhon – "Irish Lady" – after a rock off Land's End, so called in memory of a shipwrecked Irishwoman marooned on the windswept rock who could not be rescued, and whose ghost is said to appear in stormy weather.

Pollard published *Bewans Aysaryn* in 1941, a pastiche on the ancient Cornish Miracle Plays, one of the main sources for modern Cornish. Caradoc, the first Grand Bard, called it an important work in "Dasseghys Kernewek", the "revival of Cornish". She was also the Gorsedd harpist for many years, playing a small Irish harp.

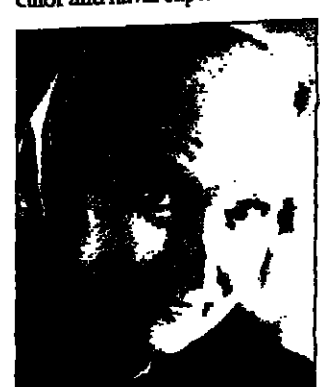
An intellectual and romantic idealist, Pollard was also intensely practical, an expert embroiderer, an authority on goats, and a worker for the conservation of Cornwall. For 14 years she was the Cornish secretary of the Council for the Protection of Rural England, and she fought to protect Cornwall from insensitive over-development. In one of her poems, based on the rhythm of "Widdcombe Fair", she summons supporters: For they be a-building in Widdcombe Bay, With their bungalows, garages, cinemas, restaurants, tea-houses, curavans, Jerry-built villas and all...

Another of Pollard's songs celebrated the saving of Mayon Cliff, 39 acres at Land's End, from "bricks and a load of concrete". She was a staunch supporter of the National Trust in Cornwall, and was part of "Ferguson's Gang", an anonymous group which helped with fund-raising to save the Cornish coastline. Secretly, a member would arrive at National Trust headquarters in London, leaving a pseudonym to identify themselves (Pollard's was Bill Stickers), drop the money and disappear.

In 1957, she became a Roman Catholic and Ferguson's Gang helped to provide land and finance to build a Catholic church on the site of the medieval chapel of Our Lady of the Portal and St Piran, in Truro (it was completed in 1973). Members of the chapel kept in daily telephone contact with Catholics all over Cornwall, with the recitation of Hail Marys at a given hour.

She was born Margaret Gladstone; her father was a nephew of the prime minister W.E. Gladstone. Her education was scanty, but she inherited her father's academic interests, and, after he died in 1920, she went up to Newnham College, Cambridge, where she was the first woman to gain first class honours in Oriental Languages, Sanskrit and Pali. In 1952, she received her PhD, and later published articles on Sanskrit and Eastern Christian texts.

In 1928, she married Captain Frank Pollard, an authority on Cornish history, a county councillor and naval captain – he was



Pollard: 'Be forever Cornish'

later known simply as "Cap'n Pollard". They enjoyed sailing together. In Truro, they lived in harmony, both pursuing their own interests in fulfilling lives.

Long before Captain Pollard died in 1968, she began giving away her worldly possessions. In old age, she lived cheerfully in one room in happy and what was to her comfortable untidiness. She was still humorous, witty, perceptive, a commentator on the world around her. A tall, statuesque figure, dressed in long skirt and with a scarf tied round her head, she remained a European scholar, a romantic Cornish enthusiast, but above all a caring and committed Catholic.

She continued to work into her seventies, with translations from Church Slavonic, and she composed witty, singable hymns in Latin, Cornish and English. She collected funds for black mums in South Africa, and, near her 80th birthday, led a pilgrimage to South Germany.

Ann Trevenan Jenkins

Margaret Steuart Gladstone, writer, bard and Sanskrit scholar: born 1 March 1903; married 1928 Frank Pollard (died 1968); died Truro, Cornwall 13 November 1996.

Idries Shah

I was surprised to read in Robert Cecil's obituary of Idries Shah [26 November] the following, writes Beryl Graves.

When in 1967 [Robert] Graves published his new translation of Omar Khayyam, challenging Edward Fitzgerald's refusal to treat the Persian Khayyam as a Sufi poet, critics saw a chance to attack Shah, despite the fact that he had no hand in Graves's version.

Idries Shah was a close friend of my husband, and the translation was a collaboration with his brother Omar Ali-Shah, based on the 12th-century text which belonged to the Shah family. Although he never actually saw the text, because of his friendship with Idries Shah Graves had complete faith in its authenticity.

Art and the world as God wants it to be

faith & reason

As the Jewish festival of Chanukah begins, Rabbi Albert H. Friedlander reflects on a triptych by a Jewish artist unveiled in a Christian church in Berlin last month.

The concordat between religion and art occasionally creates uneasiness, although art tends to win at the end: the painters of the Renaissance had their own agenda to which their patrons surrendered. In our sanctuaries we gratefully accept the artists' creations and add our own religious interpretations; or we accept their vision, which may be a new teaching.

Bezalel, in the Torah, was shown the Divine pattern which had to be followed strictly; but then he was only an artisan. The Menorah (candelabra) in Solomon's Temple is not copied in traditional synagogues out of respect to the uniqueness of the Temple. In our homes, during Chanukah days in the past, we did have nine-branched candelabras twisted into all possible forms – new artistic visions are encouraged here. Yet the sanctuary remains a special domain.

Is that always true? Last month I went to Berlin to dedicate an altar in church. A job for a rabbi? I thought so. The community was consecrating *Chanukah in the Holocaust*, a triptych designed by the London sculptor and psychoanalyst Ismond Rosen, who had just died. Dr Rosen had suffered from motor neurone disease and, at the end, could barely move one finger and blink with his eye. Yet, assisted by his daughter and wife, he also designed an altar on his computer which will now stand before the triptych. The dedication was attended by the Prime Minister of Brandenburg, Manfred Stolpe; Bishop Wolfgang Huber of Berlin, who flew back from Sarajevo in order to participate; the mayor of Berlin, Canon Paul Oestreicher; and by me. The German dignitaries were united in their statements that the guilt of German Christians and of the Church during the Holocaust had to be acknowledged; and that prayer in the Church was strengthened by the knowledge that the Jew Jesus would have died at Auschwitz.

How could there be prayers in this German church without the awareness of the Holocaust? Canon Oestreicher reminded them that this triptych had stood in St Paul's Cathedral in London, but that it had a mission to fulfil in Berlin: this was the Jewish artist's gift to the German people. As a rabbi and friend of the Rosen family, I pointed out that the artist had also been a healer, and there was an inner trauma within that community which would open themselves to an artist's vision and its ethical, religious message. Germany had just acknowledged that reparations must be paid to Guernica's citizens, victims of a German air attack over half a century ago. Surely, it was Picasso's *Guernica*, one of the great masterpieces of 20th-century art, which had kept the memory of that crime alive. The German theologian Paul Tillich, looking at *Guernica*, had written: "He who can hear and express meaninglessness shows that he experiences meaning within the desert of meaninglessness." Language and poetry, according to the German thinker Adorno, had died after Auschwitz. Was this true of art as the "asymptotic embodiment of human, rational, ethical values"; and his Jew-

ish successor Hermann Cohen wrote: "It depicts the Messiah; that is, art is man's anticipatory construction of the world as it ought to be, as God wants it to be." In the synagogue one does not adore the utensils of worship. The menorah, the covers of the Torah, and the curtains of the Holy Ark are there to lead us to the awareness of the Holy, to the ethical commandments which stand behind each act of prayer. Religion does control art in the sanctuary and in the Jewish home. The Chanukah menorah was placed in the windows of the home to proclaim the miracle of faith which survives darkness. And at the doorway of our homes we affix the *mezuzah*: a capsule containing our central prayers affirming the Oneness of God. Entering or leaving through the door, one kisses that beautifully fashioned artefact.

Sometimes, as in the case of *Guernica*, an independent statement is made by the artist which challenges the faith, the community, society. Last week, on World AIDS Day, the curator of Judaica at the Judah L. Magnes Jewish Museum in California wanted to bring the community to full awareness of this plague in the world. An artist created a special installation which incorporated a door frame that had a *mezuzah* affixed to it, a capsule filled with his own AIDS-infected blood. One kisses a *mezuzah*! An AIDS-infected *mezuzah*! Art has its own independent message, even when, as in this case, there was a mixed response. And each century finds ways of expressing the frightening dimensions of life.

Goya's dark pictures of war in the Prado have moved me more to tears than most sermons (there, I may cry for other reasons). And when I stood in front of Ismond Rosen's *Christ in the Holocaust*, I realised that some Christians must have been upset – but all of them learnt something at this point which belongs in both church and synagogue: compassion for the suffering.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

BIRTHS

DIGITALIO: Daniel Roe, born 1 December 1996 to Josephine (née Lawlor) and Romano. Greatest thanks to all at King's Hospital, SE5.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (births, adoptions, marriages, deaths, funeral services, wedding anniversaries, in Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned to 0171-293 2011 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2012) or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (notices, funerals, forthcoming marriages, marriages) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

Luncheons

Saints and Sinners Club

The Saints and Sinners Christmas Luncheon was held yesterday at the Savoy Hotel, London, W.C. Mr Gay Kenderley was in the chair. Mr Terry Walsh, Mr Robbie Glen, Mr Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie and Mr Neil Benson also spoke.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

Prince Edward today attends the rugby match between the Barbarians and Australia at Twickenham, Middlesex.

Changing of the Guard

TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment carries the Queen's Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. TOMORROW: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. 1st Battalion Irish Grenads mounts the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11am. Guard provided by the Irish Grenads.

Birthdays

TODAY: Sir Fred Atkinson, economist, 77; Miss Ellen Burstyn, actress, 64; Professor Noam Chomsky, linguist, 68; Mr Donald Critchlow, Miller, former headmaster and rugby international, 90; Lord Elystan Morgan, circuit judge and former MP, 64; Mr David Evans, trade unionist, 61; Mr Kaffie Fassett, textile designer, 59; Professor Sir Abraham Goldberger, physician, 73; Professor Norman Gowar, Principal, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, London, 56; Sir Bryan Hopkin, economist, 82; Mr Geoff Lawson, cricketer, 38; The Countess of Limerick, Chairman Emeritus, British Red Cross Society, 61; Mr Willie Nolan, singer, 47; Mr Edmund Ross, band leader, 86; Sir Sydney Samuelson, first British Film Commissioner, 71; Dr Mario Soares, president of Portugal, 72; The Rev Ronald Toulson, former Principal, St Chad's College, Durham, 70; Mr Ed Wallace, film actor, 81; Miss Helen Watts, concert and opera singer, 69.

TOMORROW: Sir Ralph Carr-Ellison, Lord-Lieutenant of Tyne and Wear, 71; Mr Julian Critchley MP, 66; Mr Harold Ellison MP, 36; Professor Sir Roger Elliott, physician, 68; Richard Fleischer, film director, 80; Mr Lucian Freud, painter, 74; Mr James Galway, flautist, 57; Sir de Vilers Grant, former leader, South African United Party, 83; Mrs Pauline Green, MEP, 48; Mr Ian Greig, cricketer, 41; Mr Geoff Hurst, footballer, 55; Mr Stephen Jeffries, cricketer, 39; Sir Peter Levene, chairman and chief executive, Canary Wharf, 55; Miss Jenny Linden, actress, 36; Mr Terry McDermott, footballer, 45; Sir Jonathan Parker, High Court judge, 59; Lord Prys-Davies, solicitor and politician, 73; Sir Bernard Rice, High Court judge, 52; Mr Paul Rutherford, singer, 37; Mr Maximilian Schell, actor, 66; Dr Sir Alan Stewart, former Vice-Chancellor of Massey University, 79; Mr Michael Tager, Editor, *Home*, 48; *Chatter Evening News*, 53; Mr David Verry, chief executive and chairman,

Lazard Brothers, 46; Sir William Wood, former Second Crown Estate Commissioner, 80.

Anniversaries

TODAY: Births: Gian Lorenzo Bernini, sculptor, 1688; Allan Cunningham, poet, 1784; Joseph Severn, painter, 1793; Wills Gilbert Colver, novelist, 1876; Arthur Joyce Lunel Cary, author, 1888; Stuart Davis, abstract painter, 1894; Deather Sir Peter Lely (Pieter van der Feet), portrait painter, 1680; Algernon Swinburn, republican and patriot, headed, 1683; Meinert Hobbema, landscape painter, 1709; Marshal Michel Ney, soldier, executed for treason, 1815; William Bligh, captain of the *Bounty*, 1817; John Flammarion, sculptor, 1826; Sir Frederick Trevelyan, physician, 1923; Thornton Niven Wilder, novelist, 1925; Robert Rankin Graves, poet, 1985; Kathleen Harrison, actress, 1995. On this day: William Pitt the Younger became prime minister, 1783; Cullen and Sullivan's *The Gondoliers* was first produced, 1889; an imperial edict authorised all Chinese to cut their pig tails, 1911; David Lloyd George became British prime minister, 1916; the first parliament of the Irish Free State met, electing William Thomas Cosgrave as president, 1922; the partition of Northern Ireland voted against being included in the Irish Free State, 1922; Japanese aircraft attacked Pearl Harbor, 1941; Apollo 17 was launched from Cape Kennedy, 1972. Today is the Feast Day of St Ambrose of Milan, St Buthine or Beothius, St Euphrosinus, St Martin of Sanjour and St Servus.

TOMORROW: Births: Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus), poet, 65 BC; Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, 1542; George Alfred Henry, author of boys' books, 1832; Aristotle Lion, sculptor, 1861; Georges-Léon Jules-Marie Feytaud, playwright, 1862; Jean Julius Christian Sibyllus, composer, 1863; George Norman Douglas, diplomat and writer, 1868; Padric Colum, poet, 1881; James Grover Thurber, wit and cartoonist,

1894; Deather John Pym, statesman, 1643; Thomas Corneli, playwright, 1709; Thomas De Quincey, author, 1859; Herbert Spencer, writer and philosopher, 1903; Gertrude Jekyll, landscape architect, 1932; Golda Meir (Goldie Mabowitch), stateswoman, 1878; John Winston Lennon, former Beatle, shot in New York 1980. On this day: Prince Albert Edward (later King Edward VII) became Prince of Wales, 1841; Pope Pius IX promulgated the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, 1854; Clifton Suspension Bridge was opened, 1864; the German fleet was sunk in the Battle of the Falkland Islands, 1914; the London to Australia airmail service was begun, 1934; Germany launched her first aircraft-carrier, the *Griff*, 1938; Union of Mineworkers, 1981; Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev signed an agreement eliminating all ground-based intermediate-range nuclear missiles, 1987. Tomorrow is the Feast Day of The Immaculate Conception, St Eucharis, St Patapi, St Romanic and Sophronius of Cyprus.

Lectures

TODAY: National Gallery: Jacqueline Lewis, "Christmas (I): Gossamer, The Adoration of the Magi", 12pm. Victoria and Albert Museum: Anna Contadini, "Islamic Glass", 2.30pm. Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradbury, "Bridging the Generation Gaps in Art", 1pm.

TOMORROW: Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradbury, "Works of Memorabilia Simplicity", 2.30pm.

إلى الأبد



The West can weaken the Balkan strongmen

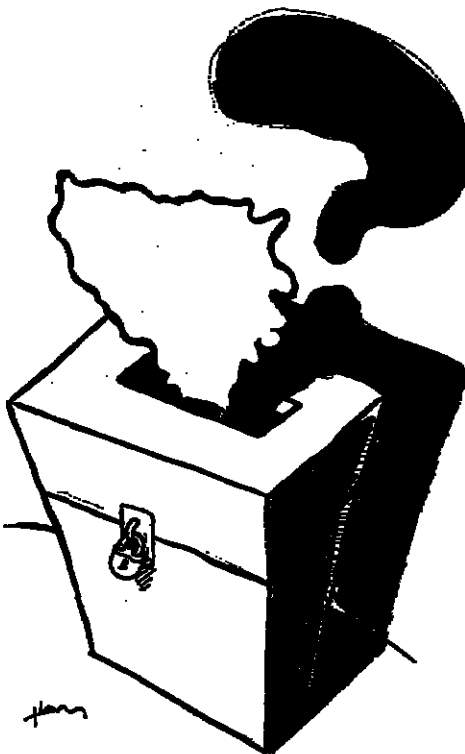
One year after the end of the Bosnian war, there are fresh political upheavals in former Yugoslavia – but this time the upheavals may bring a brighter future for the people of this long-troubled region of Europe. The daily street demonstrations in Belgrade against President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia, and recent protests in Zagreb against President Franjo Tudjman of Croatia, show that an increasingly large number of Serbs and Croats want a change from the diet of authoritarian nationalism on which they have been fed throughout the 1990s. The demonstrators want democracy, an end to official corruption, media free of state control, and civil rights – in short, everything that people elsewhere in Eastern Europe won in 1989, but which Mr Milosevic and Mr Tudjman correctly regard as threats to their personal authority.

It is no coincidence that the popular challenges to the strongmen of Serbia and Croatia have arisen since the end of the 1991-95 wars in former Yugoslavia. During the conflicts, only a minority of brave individuals dared raise the banner of criticism and take the risk of being branded as traitors by their rulers. Today, a Serb or Croat who demands political reforms and civil liberties cannot be accused of jeopardising his country's existence, for the wars are over and the Serbian and Croatian governments no longer have the right, if ever they did, to insist on meek submission to authority in the name of national unity.

Predictably, the ruling parties in Belgrade and Zagreb – the Socialist Party of Serbia and Croatian Democratic Union – have reacted to the popular unrest by condemning "foreign interference" in their countries' internal affairs. How often we used to hear such growling from the likes of Nicolae Ceausescu, Erich Honecker and Gustav Husak in the Eastern Europe of the 1980s. Little good did it do those small dictators, and little good will it do Mr Milosevic and Mr Tudjman, for the fundamental pressure for change is coming from within their societies, not from outside.

In Serbia, the street protests were triggered by the transparently unfair decision of the authorities to annul municipal election victories for the opposition *Zajedno* (Together) Coalition in Belgrade and other large towns. But the popular discontent had deeper roots, lying in years of economic mismanagement, social hardship and the perception of the ruling elite as a group that has enriched itself in the company of war profiteers and gangsters. Even if Mr Milosevic ultimately allows the opposition to take power at local government level, the pressure for reform is unlikely to disappear.

In Croatia's case, about 100,000 people demonstrated in Zagreb last month in protest at the government's decision to ban the city's only independent radio station. Although the government soon reversed the decision, its attempts to muzzle freedom of



expression have been one of the most consistent and least attractive features of Mr Tudjman's six years in power. Like Mr Milosevic in Belgrade, he has also dug a hole for himself by refusing to recognise an opposition victory in municipal elections in Zagreb.

Far from sponsoring popular protest in Serbia and Croatia, Western governments have, if anything, displayed considerable caution in expressing support for the pro-democracy forces in Belgrade and Zagreb. Their message seems to be that democratic change would be welcome, and that violent repression of the opposition would certainly be unacceptable, but that other factors need to be kept in mind. This refers above all to the supposedly crucial role of Mr Milosevic and Mr Tudjman in keeping Bosnia at peace.

But are the two leaders really doing all they can to uphold the Dayton peace settlement for Bosnia? As was made clear during this week's conference on Bosnia in London, Mr Milosevic in particular seems to have nothing but contempt for one of Dayton's central provisions – the capture of indicted war criminals and their transfer to the United Nations tribunal in The Hague for trial. For all his disputes with the Bosnian Serb leadership, there is little doubt that Mr Milosevic could exert pressure in the necessary direction if he so chose. As for Mr Tudjman, he continues to support separatist Bosnian Croats who wish to merge with Croatia rather than make a suc-

cess of Bosnia's Muslim-Croat Federation. The Bosnian Croats' mini-state, Herzeg-Bosnia, was officially abolished last summer, but continues to exist in practice, flying the Croatian flag and using the Croatian currency. There is every reason to suppose that Mr Tudjman still harbours a vision of a Greater Croatian state.

The year-old peace in Bosnia is like the proverbial glass which, depending on one's perspective, is either half-full or half-empty. The peace has held, and that is partly because the Serbian and Croatian leaders have helped to keep it. But the peace is also fragile, and that is because some of their policies continually undermine it.

Western governments should recognise that a change of leadership in Belgrade and Zagreb would not necessarily jeopardise the Dayton settlement. The Serbian and Croatian oppositions are clear that they support peace in Bosnia. Anything less, and they know that they would be pariahs on the international stage.

More broadly, it would surely be desirable to see less nationalistic, less authoritarian governments in Serbia and Croatia. Perhaps Mr Milosevic and Mr Tudjman have it within themselves to change. But the more they prove themselves unwilling to abide by European standards of democracy and civil liberty, the less they deserve to be propped up by us.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Abortion: time to speak out for a right women thought they had won

Sir: So the "pro-life" brigade is on the march again. They have an inbuilt campaigning advantage because the most fervent supporter of free choice can only say, at best, that abortion is the lesser of two evils. They are also at an advantage since those of us who have had abortions do not wish to advertise the fact: we have friends and relations who might be distressed, or we simply prefer not to acknowledge and discuss a negative experience.

I think the time has come for us to speak out. I have had an abortion, and I am grateful that the law and the British Pregnancy Advisory Service made the experience as un-traumatic as it could be. Yes, I have since wondered whether I made the right decision – but I have wondered that

about every major decision of my adult life. No, I have never suffered agonies of guilt or remorse, and for me it was no worse than an early miscarriage (which I've also experienced).

I supported the right to choose abortion before I was faced with the choice myself, and I continue to support it now, and I urge every reader who can say the same to speak out with me.

SARAH GILBERT
Oswestry, Shropshire

Sir: I write to applaud and support Suzanne Moore (6 December). Nearing seventy now, I lived as an adult through decades before the Abortion Act and knew just how awful things were for women

pregnant without wanting to be.

I had truly thought a battle had been definitively won and that those days simply would not return, any more than that people would return to thinking the earth to be flat. So when the press has recently been reporting a serious political movement towards removing the possibility (far from a right, even under present legislation) of legal abortion, my heart has sunk.

I hope that the rest of the silent majority will become noisy against what dares to call itself the pro-life movement. More, let us be unequivocal and say that the law should be changed to make the choice of early abortion an unqualified right for women.

IAN LESLIE
London SE24

Sir: Imogen Caterer (letter, 4 December), seems to suggest that pro-lifers do not value single mothers. Is she unaware of all the caring work carried out quietly by Life and other such organisations year in and year out? Life helps thousands of women every year providing follow-up care for many unsupported mothers, material help including baby clothes and equipment, and accommodation in over 50 Life houses.

Life's philosophy is defined as "respect for every human life from conception until natural death" and so covers categories she mentions such as the disabled. Of course Life would like to campaign on wider issues than abortion, and does so wherever possible, but unlike the abortion services, pro-life groups receive no

government funding, and there is a limit to what can be done by unpaid volunteers. Therefore the focus has to be on the crisis of 4 million unborn babies having been legally destroyed in this so-called civilised country. That is enough to be going on with.

JEAN PAYNE
Hereford Life Group

Sir: "The anti-abortionists are very clever at manipulating the media. By focusing on particular and sometimes harrowing cases..." – Suzanne Moore (6 December).

Was it not precisely the focusing on particular and harrowing cases back in the Sixties that led to the Abortion Reform Act? The Rev DAVID PERRY
Hull

LETTER from THE EDITOR

First of all, to selected readers, an apology – some 20,000 of you, mostly in London, did not get last Saturday's paper until nearly lunchtime, if at all. This was not because we were too idle to write it, or were out at a Christmas party. It was because an aluminium label fell off inside a very high-voltage cable in our Watford printing plant, causing an electrical explosion. It was a very big bang indeed, and it took many hours to get the presses running again. Sorry.

heated. It certainly is now. Let no-one try to convince you that relations between senior Conservatives are really much better than they seem. For me, the mood was well caught by an influential if junior pro-European. We were standing at the edge of a party, talking about the week. "The real problem," I said mildly, "is surely that the Prime Minister..." He cut me off, interjecting, "is stupid and cowardly, yes, I know – not a great combination, is it?"

I've had lots of complaints both from the shooting lobby, 2,000 or so of whom had

'I remember lunch with a Labour MP at a restaurant where wine was served in two-litre bottles. My guest consumed the lot. It had no visible effect'

marched through central London to protest about the removal of their guns, and from anti-shooters who protested about my decision to allow the pro-shooters to advertise in the newspaper. The shooters, whose letters were suspiciously similar in wording, wanted to know why we hadn't reported their demonstration. The answer is not bias, but that there are scores of demos in London on almost any weekend: unless huge, they are generally unreported anywhere. Complainants on the other side argued that our anti-gun editorial line was compromised by taking the adverts. But there is a free speech question here – if advertisements are legal and not pornographic, then they shouldn't be censored, least of all by journalists. I disagree with the gun lobby – I also think it has an absolute right to put its case directly to the public.

Andrew Marr

QUOTE UNQUOTE

Ah. We have never had a civilised conversation. Shall we try? – Michael Heseltine, Deputy Prime Minister, on finding himself sitting next to the Shadow Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook

A safe, effective and inexpensive vaccine is the only way to save the future generations of all our cultures – Elizabeth Taylor, actress, calling for a global effort to defeat AIDS

This is the first time I can truthfully say that I don't have an idea for a show at all – Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber

Some people have referred to me as a wet, but of course I am dry now – Sir Nicholas Scott, dejected Conservative MP, who has given up alcohol

I've resigned umpteen times. It's like making some vulgar noise in front of a duchess. The BBC treats my resignations as though they never happened – John Simpson, the BBC's foreign editor

For this Government, and different ministerial briefings we have on Europe, a day is now a long time in politics. We may soon have the Today policy, the One O'Clock News policy, the Six O'Clock News policy and the Nine O'Clock News policy – Gordon Brown, Shadow Chancellor

Put it this way, I'm sure I'll die happy – Jim Moffat, whose family won £3,213,822 on the National Lottery

Wasteful lorries criss-cross Europe

Sir: Sarah Helm's article about the doubling of traffic through the Brenner Pass (4 December) touches on a wider issue, which affects every town and village in every EU country. Freedom from trade barriers has come to mean the freedom to send anything to anywhere, by road, if the supplier can make a profit. And profit to the supplier always means a loss to the environment which will never appear in the accounts.

In recent months I have been aware of sandwiches being delivered daily from Nottingham to Stuttgart; American wine being bottled in Belgium and driven to Scotland; and Bavarian potatoes being driven through the Brenner Pass to Italy to be washed, and then back again to the

potato crisp factory. Any supermarket shelf will reveal the extent to which foodstuffs criss-cross Europe. And foodstuffs are only part of the problem.

Of course, free trade brings benefits, and the road builders love it. But let us not forget the cost of bypass after bypass; the motorways and tunnels; the fumes and illness; the noise and ugliness. The loss of production jobs tends to be in marginal areas, where there is little chance to create them through substitution. We are in desperate need of a European policy to ensure that road use is properly costed, across the Union. Trade would not come to a halt, but it would steer closer to sanity.

DAVID BRANCHER
Abergavenny, Gwent

Falling into the cute, furry animal trap

Sir: Richard D North's well-researched article (5 December) is a most welcome contribution toward finally having a balanced debate on fur and the trapping of wild animals.

We never seem to get beyond looking after cute furry animals in fur-away countries, though less than 10 per cent of wild-caught animals end up in the fur trade. Several million animals (including many furbearers) are trapped and killed in Europe each year, yet their plight is largely ignored. A fox trapped in France deserves to die as humanely as a furry muskrat in Canada.

One might well ask why Peta's campaign against the leghold trap ignores its use in Europe. There is no

EU-wide ban on leghold traps. Toothed, steel-jawed traps (banned in Canada) are sold in Belgium, with Germany being an important manufacturer. Steel-jawed leghold traps are also used in France, yet we see no massive advertising campaigns by animal rights and welfare groups.

With or without a fur trade, trapping will continue. It is about time that the animal welfare groups moved on from publicity gimmicks against fur and used their resources constructively by supporting research into developing the best possible traps. That would indeed represent real progress in animal welfare.

DEIRDRE DEADY
Brussels

Peers have no right to scupper reform

Sir: Baron Cecil (otherwise known as Viscount Cranborne) may be considered by our political elite to be a member of the "most distinguished dynasty in 400 years of British politics" (4 December). But to most of us, he has no moral authority on which to base his plans to scupper possible proposals for democratic reform brought forward by a new government elected by the people of the UK.

Of course, we should not forget our history. It is important that democratic reform keeps those traditions and practices which work effectively, in order to maintain our own distinctive political culture. But how can a second chamber predominantly based on an accident of birth and through a male line of succession possibly take us into the 21st century? The time for aristocratic families to have fun at playing politics is past. Lord Cranborne's actions can only demonstrate to us that reform of the House of Lords is long overdue.

ANDREW FUDGE
Director, Chamber 88
London EC1

Schools should teach the poor to cook

Sir: Could I suggest that neither the Rev Paul Nicholson (letter, 28 November) nor Paul Ashton (3 December) has hit the nail on the head about malnutrition in low-income groups.

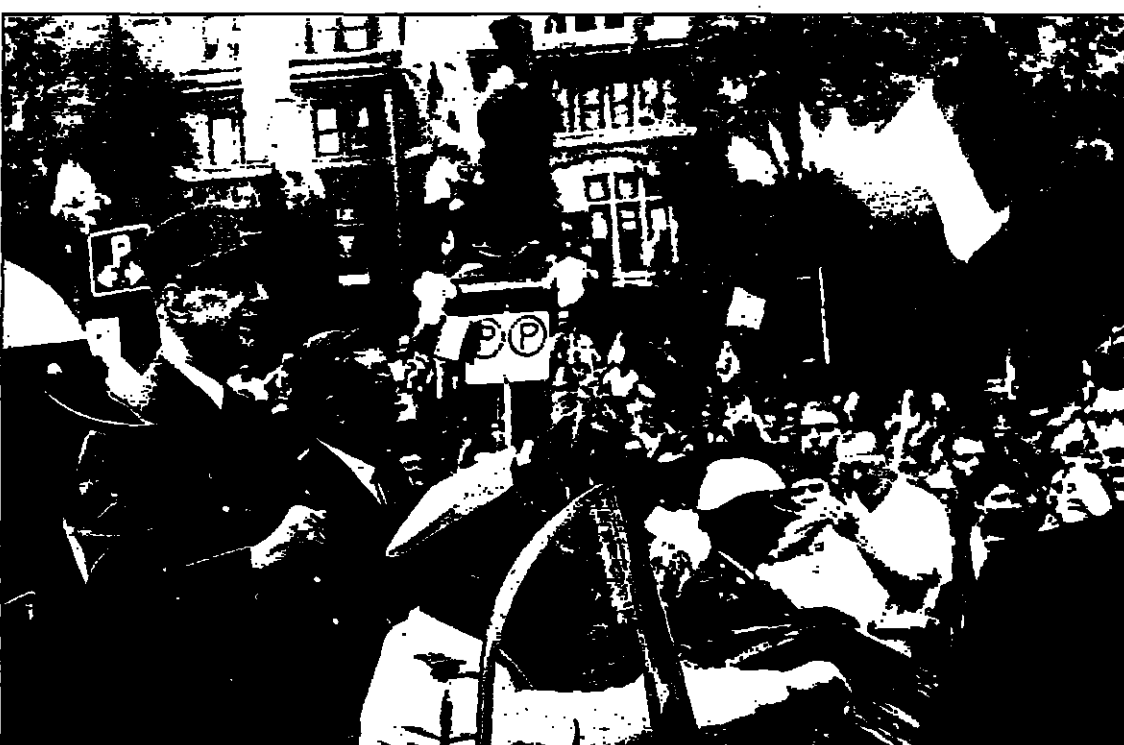
The main reason, I feel, is that many people do not have sufficient knowledge of nutrition, and moreover they cannot cook. Why? As a result of the demise of Home Economics in the majority of our schools.

Mrs S E COWIN
Crewe, Cheshire

Hot and cold

Sir: It is noticeable that most people have already adopted the Celsius scale for cold conditions (we understand -3C better than 23F) while still preferring Fahrenheit for summer temperatures ("Whatever happened to Fahrenheit?", 30 November).

DAVID MILLER
Norwich



Vive le général: crowds greet De Gaulle in Quebec, 1967

Photograph: Hulton Getty

'Foreign occupation' drove Quebecers into the arms of Pétain

Sir: If it is pointed out that Quebec people were "Vichyists", or more precisely "Pétainists" in the Forties, (report, 7 November, letter, 12 November) it may be interesting to mention that they gave De Gaulle a particularly warm welcome in 1967, leading him to respond with his famous call, "Vive le Québec libre".

In 1940, most French Canadians indeed placed their confidence in Marshal Pétain, who assumed the

tragedy of defeat. It was much the same in France. It was only gradually that the French acknowledged, as the great resistance fighter Colonel Remy put it, that if Pétain was a shield, De Gaulle was the sword.

Quebec people went through a similar evolution. But another feeling, more particular to them, explains their first reaction. They had no sympathy for Hitler, but the British army, awaited in France as a liberator, was for Quebecers one of the forces that had subjected their country to two centuries of foreign domination. In 1967, De Gaulle observed it

While crossing the country from Quebec to Montreal he was greeted by an enthusiastic crowd and said that he felt an "atmosphère de la Libération". English Canadians were offended: "He treats us as Nazis!" they said. Not at all, simply as occupiers – what they had actually been since the defeat of the army of the King of France in 1759 on the Heights of Abraham.

PIERRE-LOUIS MALLÉN
Member of the Institut de France
Paris

Scientific progress

Sir: I graduated with an upper second in chemistry in 1970. This week I have been helping my 14-year-old daughter, in the first year of her GCSE studies in science, with some chemistry problems ("Shepherd plans to make exams tougher", 6 December).

She was expected to tackle subjects in organic chemistry that I had not even considered until the lower sixth form. I cannot square this with the notion that children now are not being taught science to the same level as 20 years ago. Indeed, as sixth-formers back in the Sixties, we were doing as part of our revision studies for maths exam papers from the Oxford final MA in mathematics from the 1950s.

Each generation probably studies more and not less than their parents – but we just don't like to admit it. This is really most unfair to our children.

Dr PETER GLOVER
Rayleigh, Essex

Success for Northern Ireland talks

Sir: David McKittrick ("Virtual Talks on Northern Ireland", 4 December) refers to a small subscription on-line forum on CompuServe, in which I moderate a discussion on Northern Ireland. The piece states that members of this Forum "will this weekend discuss ways of keeping a republican sympathiser out of their proceedings".

There has been no suggestion of keeping any member out of our discussions because of their political views, and I could not remain part of any forum were such a policy to be adopted.

This on-line forum, in which members participate in their spare time, is one of the more rewarding things I have done. It has brought together a large group of people, of every shade of opinion, and from all parts of the world, to debate Irish issues. I was elected moderator by the

membership and try to do so with independence. I have seen positions modified, opposing views understood, and lasting friendships develop across the traditional "divide".

Our meeting on Sunday really stems from the forum's success. Members have expressed a desire to make further progress (where have I heard that before?), and I have asked them whether they want to adopt a basic platform on which future discussions might be based. I have had suggestions about different ways of doing this, and have presented them to the participants as options. One of those options is to adopt, as a starting point for our discussions, the Mitchell six principles.

I suppose the worst thing about David McKittrick's piece is that it has made me empathise with the politicians locked up inside Stormont who are engaged in the real talks. I don't suppose it will last long though.

VINCENT HANNA
London EC1

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the saturday story

It turned into a bad week for the Euro-sceptics, but the Prime Minister and his Chancellor are standing on a fault line that could yet shatter the Conservative party, says Anthony Bevins



A whiff of history at Westminster

Whoever briefed *The Daily Telegraph* that John Major was about to jettison government policy on the European single currency deserves the 1996 Golden Clob award for political incompetence, one bemused Cabinet minister told *The Independent* last week.

According to this year's golden clob, only four members of Cabinet now support the Cabinet's own agreed policy: that the Tories must keep their options open on sterling going into the single currency after 1999. But the golden clob got so much wrong this week that it should come as no surprise to learn that there are actually more than four Cabinet members who back the Government's current suck-it-and-see stance on sterling.

It was the golden clob, after all, who told *The Telegraph* that Michael Heseltine was "persuadable" – a man so unsure of his own mind that he could be

persuaded that single currency entry should be ruled out on economic grounds. Mr Heseltine, the golden wonder, is made of much sterner stuff. The most notoriously discreet member of the Government, the Deputy Prime Minister has not exactly made a secret of his pro-European views, and this week's Tory wars over the single currency had more to do with Europe than the euro.

According to sensible Cabinet opinion, it is highly unlikely that sterling will go into the first wave of the single currency in 1999. Nevertheless, it is argued, it is vital that Britain keeps the option open in order to maintain its negotiating clout, as the terms for the first wave entry will be exactly the same for those who join in later waves.

Just as importantly, however, keeping the option open on the single currency helps to define the Tory line on Europe. It draws a line in the concrete, beyond which the marauding hordes of Euro-sceptics cannot have their way.

According to one senior government source, the line stops the Tories shifting another gear against Europe, driving the party to a point at which it argues for renegotiation of the Treaty of Rome. That is seen as pusillanimous code for the endgame of withdrawal from the European Union.

One very prominent Conservative said last week that ruling sterling out of the single currency and renegotiation of the Treaty of Rome were "an unpleasant attempt to make the party uninhabitable for people like me, and a hell of a lot of others."

He, and many others, want no part of a right-wing, nationalist and isolationist Conservative Party, and they see last week's battle, keeping open the single currency option, as a last bastion of resistance.

When Kenneth Clarke finally succumbed last April to the Conservative clamour for a single currency referendum, he fought over every word in the statement that was issued by

the Prime Minister. That statement, which he still keeps in his briefcase, said: "Britain has an option, negotiated at Maastricht, of deciding whether or not to join a single currency even if others go ahead. Because we will be keeping our option open at the next election, we have decided to make a commitment in our manifesto that, if the Government decided to join a single currency during the course of the next Parliament, that decision would be subject to confirmation in a referendum."

Having won that battle, the Euro-sceptics' next target was to close off the option of joining a single currency during the course of the next Parliament – making a referendum unnecessary. By prematurely forcing that issue last week, the golden clob threw a boomerang that not only missed its target, but returned to dout the Euro-sceptics in the mouth.

After Prime Minister's Question Time on Tuesday, when Mr Major was forced to nail himself so firmly to the policy of his own Government, Euro-sceptics were not spitting blood; they were spitting teeth. Having lost the chance of going into the election as the true defenders of the pound, some were certain that the Conservative Party was heading for inevitable

defeat. Others accused Mr Clarke and Mr Heseltine of "kidnapping" the Prime Minister, and said that if he had any spine he would sack them.

Mr Major was said to be very depressed by the whole saga when he later went to chat to the backbench "troops" in the Commons tea-room. Mr Heseltine was said to be buoyant. On Sunday, he told BBC Television's *On the Record* that the Tories were heading for a 60-seat majority. By Wednesday, he told a friend that the majority was "dudging up" all the time. The Deputy Prime Minister had reason to be happy. After all, if anyone had forced Mr Major to give a lead, it had been Mr Heseltine.

Certainly, if the Chancellor's friends are to be believed, Mr Clarke was oblivious of the fact that he was in the eye of the storm. By Thursday, he could have had no doubt.

In a week in which the media became part of the news, the political editor of *The Telegraph*, George Jones, fingered Mr Major as his ultimate source, and the BBC's John Sopel suggested that was a suspicion shared by the Chancellor, having winced and hunched Mr Clarke just 24 hours earlier. At that hunch, it was put to Mr Clarke that no one would be happier than the Tory Euro-sceptics if he and Mr Heseltine were to resign in protest against a change in single currency

policy. As a statement of fact, Mr Clarke replied that it would not be a matter of himself and Mr Heseltine walking out of the Government. Many other ministers would go, too, and it was possible that some backbenchers would cross the floor of the Commons – joining Labour or the Liberal Democrats, and wiping out the Government's majority.

When Mr Clarke issued his Thursday statement, saying that he had not threatened to resign, that was true. But Mr Sopel had been very careful not to say he had threatened to resign.

This week's briefing and counter-briefing by "friends" of Mr Clarke and Mr Major were the seismic tremors indicating a geological fault line waiting to crack. Behind Mr Clarke lurks Mr Heseltine; behind Mr Major is Brian Mawhinney; behind both factions there are hard-core fanatics, the people who spoke at Thursday evening's meeting of the backbench 1922 Committee.

One former Cabinet minister described that debate as "the rising of the devils." A man of enormous political experience, he said he had never witnessed a spontaneous explosion like it. Highly respected backbenchers on both sides of the battle refer to themselves as "foot soldiers" and both armies unite in deploring Mr Major's lack of leadership.

There are times and events

at Westminster that have a tangible feel of history about them. Last week was such a time: there was the moment when the Prime Minister delivered his Tuesday restatement of existing Cabinet policy on the single currency; and, again, when he told the House that he had a statement from the Chancellor, denying a threat to resign.

It is all redolent of Margaret Thatcher's battles with Nigel Lawson, her Chancellor, and Sir Geoffrey Howe, her Deputy Prime Minister. Mr Lawson and Sir Geoffrey on a number of occasions were able to ambush Mrs Thatcher and force her into European policy lines that she detested. But she always came back, in her own time, to regurgitate and spit them out. Eventually, and inevitably, she was dumped because she went too far and was perceived as a loser.

With an election deadline just months off, there is no possibility of the party knifing Mr Major in the back. It is too late for that. But last week, they were knifing him in the chest.

Lord Tebbit said in his *Sun* column yesterday: "Why is Mr Major defying the majority of voters, Tory supporters, Tory MPs – even the majority of the Cabinet?" Norman Tebbit had not got a clue, but he did know the odds on a Labour government had been reduced still further on Tuesday, when Mr Major tore up his sterling

trump card for the election. "Like him or loathe him," he added, "you must admit no one has done more to put the way for Tony Blair than Heseltine. He worked unceasingly to destroy Margaret Thatcher and now he is well on the way to bringing down Major." Not so much boxed in, Mr Major had been crated and freighted by Mr Heseltine and Mr Clarke.

There is no doubt that Mr Major and Dr Mawhinney would still like to gnaw away at the April policy statement that Mr Clarke carries in his briefcase, to present the Tories as defenders of the faith and the pound in the next election campaign. The golden clob seems to have ruined that, for the moment at least.

But that does not mean Mr Major cannot come back, perhaps during the election itself, to say he doubts very much whether a Conservative government could take sterling into a first wave of the single currency – defying Mr Clarke and Mr Heseltine to repudiate his statement, or resign, at the height of an election campaign.

But he might then find that he has destroyed his party. While Mr Clarke and Mr Heseltine, might, just might, bite their tongues, and keep silent, grandees like Edward Heath and Douglas Hurd would not.

The Conservative Party would fall apart, and deserve to.

French Kiss



"A romantic comedy with plenty of ooh-la-las..."
Sunday Mirror

"Plenty of hilarious moments"
The Sun

"Utterly irresistible"
Mail on Sunday

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jo brand's week



A Mr Rodgers has qualified for the Miss Australia contest this week, being eligible because he has raised money for charity. I wonder what made him set his sights so low? After all, the equivalent male contest doesn't just cover the world, it extends to the entire universe. I also wonder whether Mr Rodgers's measurements will be announced as he trips down the step with the rest of the contestants.

I suppose it's no surprise that this innovation in the Miss World line-up has started in Australia, land of bronzed athletic types whose entire life seems to centre on the beach, despite the fact that those pale skins, many of which came from England, just aren't suited to the relentless beating of the antipodean sun. What would be really innovative would be an Aboriginal entrant in Miss Australia – or a male entrant who looks like Sir Les Patterson.

As all those plastic reinforcers of sexual stereotypes are popped into Christmas wrapping paper this festive season (yes, I mean the man without the genitals, "Action Man", and

his oh-so-long-limbed lady friend, "Sindy"), perhaps one should bear in mind that some of the poor buggers making these toys in Asia are earning a pound a day, which probably wouldn't even buy you Sindy's bum. Of course, Action man, Sindy, Barbie et al are a powerful symbol of Western white supremacy. Let's hope a few of those workers are sticking pins in the dolls.

Perhaps the producers of this year's anti drink-driving campaign have finally got it right by targeting peoples' vanity. A woman who has been injured in an accident is seen removing her make-up to reveal scarring on her face, and ruminating on the resulting situation. The boyfriend who caused the accident is nowhere to be seen, and one assumes he is not scarred.

I have always thought that there are lots of people who are too drunk to make a judgement about whether they can drive or not, but the responsibility also falls on passengers to put their foot down and refuse to travel with a driver who has been knocking it back. There is always one friend in a group

who is not quite as stupid as the rest, and it's up to you, Mr/Ms Sensible.

A little headline caught my eye in one of the tabloids this week. It said: "Vigilantes on alert to save virgins." I thought it must be about America, but no – it referred to Sheffield. To celebrate the new academic year, apparently, thousands of Sheffield students take part in a "Pyjama Jump", a ritual in which they wander round the city with not much on, get drunk and snog people (sounds like a normal day at college to me). Last year, however, there were complaints that students were at it in every conceivable location around the city. Women's groups are sending out teams to ensure that young women

are not being taken advantage of. I suppose "Vulnerable women protected by other women" wouldn't have been salacious enough.

One wonders whether the re-emergence of Victorian diseases such as TB is some sort of odd play by the Government to spend less money on expensive medical research. After all, illnesses that wipe you out in later life dwindle to insignificance when the Victorian diseases creep back on the scene. Tiny Tim and Dora Copperfield are with us again. If only a few ghosts were available to visit Johnny Major and give him a good talking to, things would be so different. As it is, he remains firmly in the role of Mr Squickers. A merry Christmas to us one and all.

I am appalled by the price of toys and various other products intended to brighten the faces of children on Christmas Day. How parents are supposed to go into Toys R Us and the like and keep smiles on their faces while forking out more than £200 for a Play Station I do not know. So I have invented a game that will give children and adults hours of pleasure and is very cheap. It's possible I have plagiarised it subconsciously from somewhere. Still, I don't intend to patent it, so that's okay. It's called Egg Roulette.

Buy six eggs, hard boil one or more and put them back in the box with the raw ones. Each player takes an egg, and in one swift movement bashes it on the top of his/her head. This will result in a sticky head or a slightly hurt one, depending on the force used. There are many other possibilities for position of impact, which you can use your own imaginations for. It is not a wasteful game either, because you can either make a sandwich or have a shampoo afterwards. Yes, it's possible I am a bit tired ... I'm on a very long tour.

جوزاء الاطفال

a grey matter

A concentration of old, rich folk is a bad thing; they clog up hotels with tea dances

david aaronovitch

The political correctness lobby claimed another victim this week. The scalp in question was the unevenly covered one of Conservative MP David Nicholson, the member for Taunton.

Mr Nicholson, for those who missed the tale, is being accused of ageism and communism by political ally and foe alike. He stands in need of a friend – and I am prepared to be that friend.

Let us first recap on Mr N's crime. Over the last few years, the beautiful county town of Somerset which he represents has changed out of all recognition. On the fringes, where once the corpses resounded to the "jug-jug" of the night-jar and the "pee-wit" of whatever goes "pee-wit", now stand huge estates. These estates house thousands of wealthy elderly incomers, drawn to Somerset by the climate, the friendliness of the locals and things going "pee-wit". Now Mr Nicholson has drawn attention to the unsustainability of this internal immigration. "We have to ask ourselves," Mr Nicholson has asked, "how long we can keep the door open." Even people who have moved into Somerset recently, he reveals, are saying "enough is enough".

Mr Nicholson – though few dare agree with him – is quite right. Consider. A large concentration of old, rich folk is a bad thing. They monopolise GPs (they can afford to spend days hanging around waiting-rooms), occupy all the hospital beds, stand in front of you in queues and then argue interminably with the shopkeeper, bus driver or whatever, clog up hotels with their tea dances and (courtesy of the disabled driver's badge) park anywhere they like.

They also alter the character of the area. They prefer bungalows to traditional two-storey houses, kill the atmosphere in pubs, the bland smell of their cooking suffuses the air and – as Mr Nicholson says – the very virtues which brought them to the area in the first place are destroyed by their presence. With indigenous Tauntonians becoming disenchanted, it is only a matter of time before violence breaks out. In his famous Rivers of Blood speech, Enoch

Powell – in one unforgettable piece of imagery – talked of grinning picaninies pushing excrement through the doors of local old ladies. Well, it's coming true in Taunton, except this time it's the grinning old ladies who are pushing excrement through the doors of local picaninies.

Something must be done to avert tragedy. But what? Tinkering with the planning regulations so as to penalise the building of new homes on green field sites will not work. Many of these unwanted immigrants will simply cough up the extra. Nor can the matter be left to the hidden hand of the market. By the time environmental despoliation discourages inward movement, it will (axiomatically) be too late.

Thus the desperate Mr Nicholson has proposed that some kind of limitation must be placed on the right of abode within certain parts of the country – a rule not unlike that which exists already in the Channel Islands. A Guernseyite or a Jerseyan can come and live anywhere in Britain, but if you want to live there, you have to pass stringent financial and other criteria. So the principle is well established.

But to whom should restriction be applied? And over what area? There is some suggestion of limiting ingress to those with "ties" to Taunton, such as a grandparent from the area. "Impossible!" yells the PC brigade: "how can you possibly establish such connections?" Quite easily, actually. At least one of our European partners has extensive experience this century of making such inquiries, with significant success. A simple question on one's ID card (when they are introduced) requesting details of parental and grandparental birth-place and any domiciles over, say, five years, should enable speedy judgement about entitlement to live in a particular place. Should you fail the test, you will not be able to buy a local house. If you buy one, and then are discovered to have falsified the record, the property will be handed over to the community.

It is a paradox, but only by making it impossible to live there can Taunton be a place where folk would like to live.

The disease that makes everyone an expert

by Yvette Cooper

Suppose the Duchess of Kent had cried off from her engagements with pneumonia. Or multiple sclerosis. Would the *Today* programme have roped in several doctors to debate her illness? Would the newspapers have used the Royal almanac as an excuse to debate the disease? Hardly.

Had she announced she was HIV positive, eyebrows would have been raised. But otherwise no other illness sets people salivating as much as chronic fatigue syndrome, the illness she has been diagnosed with.

The popular and media appetite for debates about CFS seems bizarre. It is easy enough to understand why sufferers might be interested in the causes and cures, but why does everyone else have such a stake in it? The illness itself is incredibly boring – month after month of sofa-bound inactivity. Yet public interest seems endless. In the absence of a conclusive cause, CFS has become the playground for professionals and the public to parade their passions and anxieties. The arguments that take place on the television, in the newspapers and in the pub are more about ourselves and our fears than about the illness itself.

Take the doctors' disagreements. At the moment the illness is up for grabs. Anyone in any discipline can take a shot at it. A form of depression or mental illness, say the psychiatrists. Consultants in infectious diseases suggest a virus. An allergy, say other specialists. Researchers in every field are approaching it through their own disciplines and finding they have something to say.

It doesn't mean they are all right. Just think what doctors would be saying about AIDS if no one had discovered the HIV virus. We would have been told it was the result of mental illness, lifestyle, immune deficiencies, lots of different viruses, or (from the homophobes) a visitation from God. Keen to keep the peace, the Royal Colleges of Physicians, Psychiatrists and General Practitioners would have told us the illness was multi-causal – just as they did with CFS in October.

Psychiatrists in particular have an interest in capturing CFS for themselves. For decades they have struggled within the medical establishment to justify their discipline. If they could convince the world that CFS belonged to them, just think what a coup it would be. Then everyone would have to accept that mental illness has demonstrable physical consequences. And with high-profile sufferers like the Duchess of Kent and Clare Francis, they would make a great stab at tackling the stigmatisation of psychological illness too.



In the absence of a known cause for chronic fatigue syndrome, the illness has become an arena for our fears and anxieties – get CFS and you are labelled a failure

All things considered, you can understand why they ignore the physiological evidence about differences between depression and CFS, and the determined claims by sufferers that there is nothing wrong with their mental well-being.

Most important of all, it is easy to see why they gloss over the statistics that show that CFS sufferers are no more likely to get depressed than people with any long-term illness – being ill for ages is miserable.

So that's the experts. But what about everyone else? Why, for example, is *The Times* GP, Dr Thomas Stuttford, so determined to believe the illness is a mental disease? He isn't a psychiatrist. He doesn't seem to have a personal axe to grind or an agenda to push. So

why is he so convinced when he has no conclusive evidence to back him up?

And he isn't the only one. Journalists, family, friends, work colleagues – we're all as bad. When someone tells us they have ME, our eyes widen and our minds close. We don't know what causes the illness, but rather than suspend judgement until the conclusive evidence finally arrives, we sway with preconceptions and prejudices – and, most important of all, defence mechanisms.

For that's what this is all about: fear. The thought of being struck down for years on end, condemned to a 12-month hangover or a 24-month bout of flu is pretty scary. How much easier it becomes to han-

dle if we can tell ourselves it will never happen to us – because that illness is someone else's fault.

You have CFS because you are depressive, neurotic, unstable, unbalanced, incapable of dealing with your life – all things that I am not. Therefore I will not get CFS, and hence I feel happy again. Or, if depression won't work as an excuse, how about stress? You have CFS because you can't handle stress, or because you work too hard, or you pushed yourself into it. I am calm, cool, collected and in control over my life, therefore I won't get ill.

So the epithet "yuppie flu" really caught on during the Eighties. Most of the population who were not yuppies were relieved to blame a strange ill-

ness on the ridiculous working habits of the young and ridiculously rich. Even yuppies themselves could dismiss the illness as something which struck "would-be-yuppies" who couldn't back the pace. Describing CFS as a lifestyle disease is a nice way to package it up and cope with it, all the while maintaining the myth that ill-health is a failing, something we can always act on and resolve.

Practitioners and enthusi-

as for certain forms of alternative medicine perpetuate the myth even further. Telling us we can heal the soul within, that if we just take the right approach to our lives we will recover and be in perfect health, they actually increase the pressure on people who are ill.

Not only do you have to have a successful career and family, but you also have to be super-healthy too. Fall ill and you are a failure, because illness is something super-people know how to avoid. Fall ill with CFS and you are definitely a hopeless case, who got your lifestyle entirely wrong.

If we could get away with it, we would doubtless explain away other illnesses in the same way – as the sufferer's fault. AIDS visits the promiscuous, heart attacks hit bad eaters, lung cancer attacks smokers. Illnesses that seem truly random – we don't know who gets them and why – are too terrifying to contemplate. And they disrupt our view that we can control everything in our lives.

Avoiding stress, eating well, taking exercise and being happy all keep us healthy, of course. But by aspiring to dismiss CFS sufferers as people (different from ourselves) who haven't quite found the key to a healthy life, we are taking things to extremes. People are polarised into healthy people handling life well and victims who just can't get a grip.

Sadly many CFS sufferers, and the people who speak up for them, only make the polarisation more pronounced. By portraying themselves as victims, appearing always to be lamenting the way the world treats them, they only confirm the healthy in their views. Esther Rantzen is the worst possible spokeswoman for CFS. Sad-eyed and with a catch in her voice, she could be parading the cause of lost puppies, mugged old ladies, orphans or CFS victims. And all of it is sickening to everyone else.

No other illness parades its sufferers in this kind of way. Where the cause is known, agreed, identified, sufferers don't need to agonise and the healthy don't need to accuse.

Eventually someone, somewhere will come up with conclusive evidence about the causes of CFS. Then the illness will subside from public view, and no one but sufferers and their relatives will pay much attention. CFS will be a professional and social football no more. What a relief that will be.

Alone and dying



Just four days old, Moses had only hours to live

A gardener found this tiny, defenceless soul, abandoned in the rushes of a pond. Hungry, frozen and afraid, it seemed like a hopeless case. But his finder drove four hours to deliver him into the welcoming arms of The Blue Cross.

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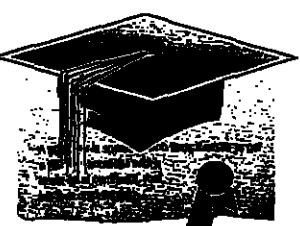
THE BLUE CROSS

Who knows what a graduate is? Discuss

Standards are going to hell – didn't we see that when Birkbeck College students failed Jeremy Paxman's general knowledge test so miserably the other day? Then there was that calm, dispassionate analysis of educational statistics, the *Chief Inspector of Schools*. Chris Woodhead, warning that A-level's gold has been tarnished.

In a society as preoccupied by the decline of Britain, the movement of grades and syllabuses over time is endlessly fascinating. But there is a more important question: what are A-levels for? If we can't answer that question, their quality is irrelevant.

The obvious answer is: no A-level, no college place. But then the question becomes: what does possession of a scroll saying Bachelor of Arts signify? It is one that seems to have stumped the professors and their funding and "quality" councils. What is a graduate? Higher education has expanded massively. There are 115 universities and 1.3 million students. Government pays for tuition, which explains why this amazing imprecision of purpose behind going to a university has gone unremarked. But now we have the London School of Economics and other academic top dogs threatening to make their undergraduates pay. That surely will concentrate the mind of students, their parents and their cash-strapped teachers alike.



They can't spell and don't seem to know much, but still land well-paid jobs. Beyond that, says David Walker, graduates have a way of defying definition

The functional answer is that a graduate is someone who finds it easier to get a job than someone with a lower-level certificate. And we love credentials. Ostensibly, our kind of economy has more and more openings for people who can think/be flexible/with uncertainty, etc. The problem is how studying the plays of Molière for a BA in French makes you all those. Perhaps it does, but nobody seems to know quite how that degree in history, or chemistry, or even business studies with accountancy really captures these desirable qualities.

Economists, typically, do not offer much insight beyond reporting that, after the event, graduates get paid more. Inside companies, graduate recruitment is far from scientific. Talk to a big recruiter, such as the Anglo-Japanese computer company ICL – which, unlike, say, Marks and Spencer, kept its doors open during the recession. It does not want knowledge – most information technology dates quickly. It does not necessarily want skills – even spelling can be taught remedially. What it wants above all is attitude, and that turns out to be a subtle blend of loyalty and a touch of (but not too much) individual spark.

University doesn't do certain vital things – this is attested by the Higher Education Quality Council's hard data as well as anecdote and the mound of badly-written job application

letters from graduates that all employers will readily show you. University does not give basic numeracy, literacy, etc. because universities have never conceived it to be their direct responsibility to make sure that with the degree certificate comes the ability to spell, count or type Owerly.

When it reported on Wednesday the Quality Council admitted, even after all its research, that it found defining a graduate terribly difficult. Yet its own existence is a result of growing anxiety about what degrees are, or rather whether the degree in English given by University College London after teaching by the *London Review of Books* crowd is really the same animal as the same qualification from, say, University of Wales at Swansea, where Kingsley Lucky Jim Amis once taught.

The distinction matters, though few intending students, their parents, teachers or would-be employers have much doubt about it. What matters more is that universities cannot say with any rigour just what the possession of their degree means, beyond status and a ranking in a newspaper chart.

The Higher Education Quality Council says that a graduate ought to know something. Sure: all degrees in medicine ought to equip intending doctors with the knowledge and skill to stick a needle in a patient's arm and inject the correct drug in the

right amount; and a degree in law should equip would-be solicitors in the pretence that searching council planning records and all the rest of the convoluted business requires a skill that deserves the kind of money most high-street solicitors, for all their moaning, still command.

But should all English graduates be able to identify Flintwich or other stock characters from Dickens? Should all maths graduates have mastered Galois theory? Should all sociology graduates have read *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*? Getting English scholars or mathematicians – let alone sociologists – to see eye to eye is going to be a hundred times more difficult than securing agreement over the national curriculum in schools.

A graduate ought to be self-motivated, and have acquired habits of study and concentration; have engaged with teaching and learning that themselves are informed by research and scholarship (try defining those).

But behind that lies a controversial idea: being a graduate means possessing an ability to criticise the status quo. That is just about what John Henry Newman said. For this eminent Victorian – no conservative in this respect – a university education was like acquiring a lens, a way of seeing things as they really are, a critical intellect. It somehow doesn't sound like a

business & city

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Greenspan rocks world stock markets

What they were saying yesterday

"How do we know when irrational exuberance has unduly escalated asset values, which then become subject to unexpected and prolonged contractions as they have in Japan over the past decade?" Alan Greenspan, Federal Reserve

"What do I think of the market? The same as I thought three months ago, six months ago, nine months ago and a year ago." Tony Dye, head of investment at PDM

"I warned a Federal Reserve meeting on Tuesday that the S&P 500 was trading at just under 19 times earnings and that's where the market peaked in 1968, 1972 and 1987." David Shulman, chief equity strategist at Salomon Brothers

"The markets are really spooked. It will be hard to regain the confidence of a few days ago." Bill Westgate, vice-president at HSBC Securities in London

"I think what happened is Greenspan is trying to talk the market down." Hildegard Zagorski, market analyst at Prudential Securities

Federal Reserve chairman warns of share price bubble

Peter Rodgers
London
and David Osborne
New York

Stock markets around the world fell sharply and London closed with its biggest one-day fall in four years yesterday after what appeared to be a deliberate attempt by Alan Greenspan, chairman of the US Federal Reserve, to prick the bubble of soaring US share prices.

Mr Greenspan's warning of the dangers of "irrational exuberance" at first raised the spectre of Black Monday in 1987 and at one stage wiped more than \$35bn off the value of the London stock market.

But by the end of the day his intervention appeared to have done no more than cool the fever of the last six weeks in US markets, though it caused severe damage to share prices in the rest of the world as dealers waited in trepidation for the New York opening.

The FTSE 100 index, after plunging 168.5 in London, later closed 88.2 points down at 3,963, wiping £15bn off the value of Britain's largest companies and £20bn off the market as a whole.

The market was also reacting to the Government's loss of an overall majority.

One senior City fund manager said: "I think it is an over-reaction. It could bounce next week." But Tony Dye, the fund manager at PDM who is famous for his bearish outlook, took the slide as confirmation of his view that the markets are badly overvalued.

In New York, the Dow Jones Industrial Average appeared to be going into free fall for a while, plunging 43.8 to 6,293.24 shortly after the opening, though reassuring US payroll figures helped it recover to a loss of under 60 points by midday. There was a lower-than-expected rise in the number of

jobs in November of 118,000 suggesting pressures on the economy were easing.

A 60-point fall in the Dow took it back only to its level in mid-November, when the latest upward movement in share prices was in full swing, adding more than 500 points to the index in the three weeks after the presidential election. The Dow Jones index has risen a quarter this year after rising by one third last year.

Mr Greenspan's key remark was: "How do we know when irrational exuberance has unduly escalated asset values, which then become subject to unexpected and prolonged contractions as they have in Japan over the past decade."

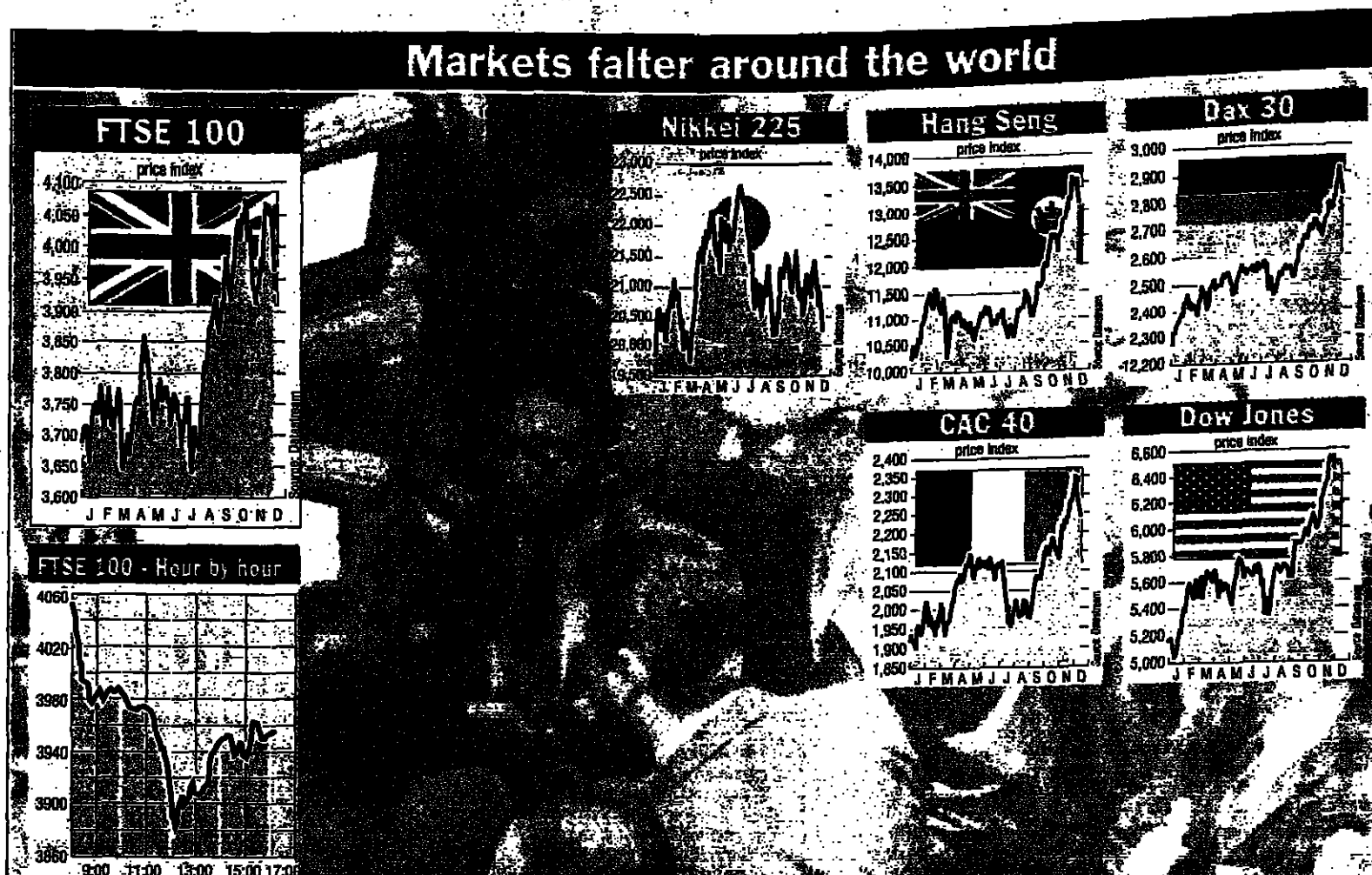
This was in the context of a discussion of whether a collapse in a financial bubble damaged the real economy and of the extent to which monetary policy should take account of asset prices such as bonds and shares.

He said: "We as central bankers need not be concerned if a collapsing financial asset bubble does not threaten to impair the real economy, its production, jobs and price stability. Indeed, the sharp stock market break of 1987 had few negative consequences for the economy."

But he made clear that central bankers needed to be wary



Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan: "If I've made myself too clear, you must have misunderstood me"



about asset price bubbles and could not afford to underestimate or become complacent about the complex links with the real economy.

In the latest phase the market boom has been sucking in enormous sums from private in-

vestors through mutual funds, the US equivalent of unit trusts, money that traditionally floods in at the peak of the market.

Fears that this is becoming an unsustainable share price boom have prompted the Federal Reserve to drop broad hints recently that it is unhappy with the level of the market but Mr Greenspan has finally decided to go public on his fears.

Economists have made an industry out of analysing the comments of Mr Greenspan, who told a business audience some years ago: "If I've made myself too clear, you must have misunderstood me."

His apparently oblique remarks are never off the cuff and invariably hold a carefully thought out message for the markets.

One dealer said: "Greenspan sent a clear message to the markets - 'Gentlemen, you are overdoing it, restrain your-

selves.' He is punctuating the speculative bubble that fuelled New York and other markets." However, Gerard Lyons, of the Japanese securities firm DKB International, said: "The markets read too much into Greenspan's comment."

The London Stock Exchange yesterday set 20 October next year as the date for conversion to the new order-driven trading system for the largest stocks. The Exchange said the date was "challenging but achievable" and the timetable included a series of milestones at which progress would be monitored.

The new trading methods are computerised and automatically match buyers and sellers, replacing the market makers who now hold shares and set prices.

But no date has been set for extending order-driven trading to the rest of the market, which will depend on experience with the largest stocks.

The launch will be preceded by extensive practical simulation and testing throughout the market, the Exchange said. The target date is to be confirmed three months ahead of implementation in the light of progress at the time.

The timing will give the market a full nine months preparation after the final specification for the new service has been published. The revised rules will be published later this month.

The share price falls followed the sun round the world, beginning with the largest one-day fall in Tokyo this year, where the Nikkei was down 667.2 to 20,276.7. The sell-off spread West to Hong Kong, where the Hang Seng was down

388.83 to 13,102.73. The shocked Far East reaction to Mr Greenspan's remarks late on Thursday night was swiftly followed by a collapse in share prices in Europe.

However, in London the volume traded was low, suggesting that much of the fall was a precautionary marking down of prices by market-makers rather than a panic sell-off.

Signs that British manufacturing industry was continuing to emerge from recession came with official figures yesterday showing that output rose 0.5 per cent in October. The growth was higher than the market was expecting, strengthening the hand of those calling for further interest rate rises, but economists warned that the recovery was fragile and could be derailed by the pound's 12 per cent appreciation since August.

Comment, page 21
Market Report, page 22

Lang imposes tough conditions on BA

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Ian Lang, the president of the Board of Trade, yesterday demanded that British Airways and American Airlines give up a substantial number of their lucrative take-off and landing slots at Heathrow airport as a condition for approving their proposed alliance.

The decision means the Government has accepted arguments raised by some rival US airlines during their unprecedented lobbying effort against the alliance. The main demand is that the two carriers give up 168 slots a week at Heathrow, which is more than 90 per cent of the total number currently allocated to American.

The conditions are a blow to Bob Ayling, chief executive of BA, who had insisted the two airlines should not be forced to give up any of their Heathrow slots. Instead he had suggested that BA be allowed to sell slots to rival carriers.

The announcement came as "open skies" talks between UK and US government officials were coming to a close in London. The US negotiating team has already stated that it will

only approve the alliance if the British Government agrees to free up access to Heathrow for American carriers.

As predicted, the Office of Fair Trading had advised that "rigorous undertakings" should be demanded if the deal was not to be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr Lang said competition must not be compromised by the tie-up, which would give the two carriers some 60 per cent of seat capacity on flights between the UK and US. He accepted the OFT's ruling that the alliance should lose 70 slots a



Bob Ayling: Had hoped to be able to sell slots

week over the winter and a further 28 slots a week next summer. These slots would have to be given up permanently.

In addition, BA and American have to lease a further 70 slots by the winter of 1998, though these could be recovered later if competing airlines managed to buy up their own slots through the informal trading system which currently operates. They have also been asked to reduce services between London and Dallas where BA and American gain a monopoly.

Another condition is that British Airways must allow US-Air, the carrier in which is has a near 25 per cent stake, to run rival transatlantic services. Relations between the two airlines broke down dramatically after BA announced its link-up with American. The alliance should also open up access to its frequent flyer scheme.

Mr Lang commented: "Without suitable undertakings the alliance would be likely to lead to a significant loss of actual and potential competition, particularly for time sensitive, mainly business passengers, on those routes where BA and AA currently compete, and for all passengers on the transatlantic market."

£782m 'knockout' offer for Northern

CalEnergy, the US power company, yesterday unexpectedly raised its takeover bid for Northern Electric in a further attempt to intensify the pressure on the company, writes Chris Godsmark.

However, David Morris, Northern's chairman, refused to bow to pressure and rejected the higher offer, which has been increased by £16m to a total of £782m.

CE Electric, the bid vehicle controlled by CalEnergy and its partner, the US construction company Peter Kiewit, increased the cash bid from 630p a share to 650p, with a slight rise

in the offer for Northern's preference shares from 103p to 105p. CE has also brought forward the final date for shareholders to accept the bid from 4 January to 20 December.

One analyst described the move yesterday as a "knockout blow" against Northern, which has insisted any bidder should be prepared to pay in the region of 700p. "Psychologically it's just enough to convince Northern's shareholders that it's all over," the analyst said.

David Sokol, CalEnergy chief executive, said: "The debate over the past month has centered on the value of Northern

Electric. Prolonging the process will not further deepen the debate and is not in the interests of Northern Electric's employees or customers."

However, Northern shares edged up just 1.5p to 602.5p, with most investors more concerned with the general plunge in share prices. The company's share price has remained below CE Electric's earlier previous 630p-a-share offer price for several weeks.

A CalEnergy source commented: "We hadn't planned to announce this on the day the market fell out of bed. However, market adjustments of the

this kind of nature don't have much bearing on the fundamentals of the situation."

David Morris, Northern chairman, said the offer was still inadequate. "This fails to recognise the additional financial information we released including our recent forecast of profits for 1997." The company is likely to release another defence document next week.

CalEnergy is believed to have been anxious to bring forward the final closing date for the offer to avoid its campaign losing momentum over the Christmas break.

The outcome of both CalEn-

ergy's bid, and the £1.3bn agreed offer for East Midlands Electricity by Dominion Resources, the US utility, now depend on whether Professor Stephen Littlechild, the industry regulator, has recommended an investigation by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Though previous US takeover bids have been given the go-ahead, one theory by leading City investors is that Professor Littlechild may object to the loss of two more stock market quoted companies to use to make efficiency comparisons.

Mr Simpson, George arrived with us on 9 September. There are nearly 125,000 people in GEC and he has been getting to know some of them. He's now sitting down and carrying out a fundamental review of the businesses," commented Mr Newlands.

However there are clear indications Mr Simpson is starting to change the culture, including his habit of arriving at work as early as 7am. Lord Westinck generally did not appear at until 10.30am.

Simpson kick-starts GEC restructuring

Chris Godsmark

George Simpson, the newly appointed managing director of GEC, has revealed his first moves to restructure the company after taking over the helm from Lord Westinck.

However, GEC yesterday announced only a limited programme of factory closures and sell-offs, and said investors would have to wait longer to hear Mr Simpson's long-term strategy.

The closures and cost-cutting

moves mean the loss of 1,000 jobs, most of which will go outside the UK. David Newlands, GEC's finance director, said: "The jobs impact in this country will be really very small, in the low hundreds."

The restructuring costs reduced GEC's half-yearly profits by £160m. After the exceptional charges, pre-tax profits fell from £402m to £261m. Excluding these one-off costs profits would have risen by 4.7 per cent, to £421m.

Most of the job cuts will hit

two businesses bought by GEC in the last six months. The company said £45m of the write-offs would go to cut costs in a power transmission and distribution business, bought from AEG in September, and at the US Hazeltine Corporation, a maker of electronic identification systems.

Mr Newlands said the group was also preparing to close a large factory in continental Europe, though he declined to give further details until the employees had been told. In ad-

dition, two smaller businesses would be sold off, including one before Christmas. These general restructuring provisions would account for £65m of the write-offs.

GEC played down suggestions that the restructuring was an early indication of the direction Mr Simpson is likely to take with the empire he inherited from Lord Westinck. The group has already made clear it wants to significantly raise its profits growth.

"This is not really to do with

STOCK MARKETS									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996 High	1996 Low	Yield (%)	FTSE 100	Dow Jones	Nikkei
FTSE 100	3963.20	+6.00	+0.1	4073.10	3632.30	3.93			
FTSE 250	4435.80	+13.90	+0.3	4588.80	4015.30	3.54			
FTSE 350	2012.20	+3.70	+0.2	2022.10	1816.60	3.85			
FTSE SmallCap	2166.95	+4.18	+0.2	2244.36	1954.06	3.19			
FTSE All-Share	1983.73	+3.64	+0.2	1994.54	1791.85	3.80			
New York	6437.10	+14.16	+0.2	6547.79	5032.94	2.01			
Tokyo	20943.90	+283.99	+1.4	22866.80	19734.70	0.781			
Hong Kong	13491.56	+57.32	+0.4	13530.95	10204.87	3.061			
Frankfurt	2909.91	+43.84	+1.5	2909.91	2253.36	1.611			

Data as at 5 December

INTEREST RATES									
Money Market Rates									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	Long Term	90 Day	1 Year	3 Year	5 Year
UK	6.06	6.94	7.42	7.43	7.50	7.60			
US	5.69	5.69	6.09	5.70	6.37	6.04			
Japan	0.34	0.59	2.35	2.81	-	-			
Germany	3.22	3.09	5.64	6.11	6.58	-			

MAIN PRICE CHANGES									
Index	Price	Change	% Change	Index	Price	Change	% Change	Index	Price
Morrison	5.18	0.02	0.4	Peel	1.07	0.05	4.8	Great	2.53
Ocean Group	486.5	22	4.7	Great	2.53	0.05	2.0	Great	2.53
Tomkins	251	9.5	3.9	Great	2.53	0.05	2.0	Great	2.53

CURRENCIES									
Pound									
Index	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago	Index	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago	Index	Yesterday
\$ (London)	1.6275	-1.10c	1.5378	£ (London)	0.6144	+0.01	0.8562	¥ (London)	153.8
\$ (New York)	1.6352	-0.81c	1.5340	£ (New York)	0.6115	+0.01	0.8560	¥ (New York)	153.8
DM (London)	2.5302	-0.03p	2.2169	DM (London)	1.5547	+0.00p	1.4416	¥ (London)	153.8
¥ (London)	153.159	-0.27	155.602	¥ (London)	153.159	-0.27	155.602	¥ (London)	153.159
£ Index	91.8	-0.9	82.8	£ Index	91.8	-0.9	82.8	£ Index	91.8

Trading tide may have turned for BTR

Magnus Grimond

BTR was the only FTSE 100 company to see its share price rise yesterday after it gave a modestly up-beat view of trading in the second half. Analysts, braced for bad news after previous trading statements had led to a string of downgraded profit forecasts, said the news could mark a turning point for the industrial conglomerate.

The shares have underperformed the rest of the stock market by 44 per cent over the last three years. Yesterday, they added 7p to 237.5p while other share prices collapsed.

BTR said it had made further progress in implementing the £622m shake-up of the business announced in September, adding that it expected the second-half performance of its continuing businesses to show "some improvement" over the first six months of the year. There would, however, be "some adverse translation impact" from the current strength of the pound.

Ian Strachan, chief executive, said the statement merely confirmed what was said in September. But some analysts said that the tide might be turning for BTR.

الرياض 7 ديسمبر 1996



JEREMY WARNER

"Boosted by the runaway bull market and huge inflows of cash, the capitalisation of the US stock market is now well over \$7,000bn. Never before in history has it ever reached this level"

Wall Street fails to share Greenspan's concern

So finally someone in authority in the US has dared to say it – that Wall Street is horribly overvalued, or to put it in the same way as Alan Greenspan did, stock prices have become inflated by an "irrational exuberance". Mr Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, is not the sort to use words lightly and he must have known markets would take his remarks very seriously. Whether he anticipated that reaction would be as limited as it was is another thing. In the end the damage to share prices in London was rather worse than that of New York. In the scale of things, both setbacks barely look like more than a hiccup.

How could this be? The chairman of the Federal Reserve, no less, warns of the dangers of an overvalued stock market, referring directly to the parallels with Japan before the Tokyo market dramatically corrected itself, and virtually nothing happens. Furthermore, Mr Greenspan hinted as strongly as he could that share price inflation of the sort that has gripped Wall Street these past five years would in future be taken into account in determining monetary policy. In other words, he would actually put interest rates to choke off Wall Street's post-1992 ascent into the heavens.

Still no reaction. Wall Street falters a little, falling back to the level it was at three weeks ago, but that's where it stops. There's every chance that come Monday, the Dow will just

shrug its shoulders and continue on upwards. So much for the power of the Federal Reserve. It seems that Mr Greenspan will have to be as good as his word and actually put up interest rates if he really wants to stop this insanity.

The Fed's concern about inflated Wall Street share prices first surfaced in May when, according to a summary of its deliberations, Fed officials "questioned the sustainability of the performance of the stock market". Since then the Dow has risen another 15 per cent. Off the record, Mr Greenspan has been briefing like Topsy, again using this word "exuberance" and making it clear that he would like to see less of it. Just a few weeks back, for instance, the Wall Street Journal carried a piece reporting the Fed's growing concern about the soaring stock market. It must have been based on a briefing by Mr Greenspan since it even used the same language as he did yesterday. All to no avail. So he went public. Again nothing. Just what does a man have to do to see why the Fed is so worried, just look at the figures. On virtually every measure you care to take, share prices are now more highly valued than they have ever been. The yield is now lower at around 2 per cent and the price/earnings and price to book ratios higher than at any stage this century, which let it not be forgotten has included three great crashes.

But the statistic I find most compelling is that, boosted by the runaway bull market and huge inflows of cash, the capitalisation of the US stock market is now well over \$7,000 billion – a figure equivalent to a record 100 per cent of US gross domestic product. Never before has it ever reached this level. Before the crash of 1987 it was still only 65 per cent. Even before the much more serious crash of 1929, it rose no higher than 84 per cent. I know that the corporate sector is now clawing in a greater proportion of the world's wealth than ever before, but this cannot be right.

The problem is that even if the Fed does believe the market has reached a dangerous level of speculative excess, it is not easy to do anything about it. Raising interest rates just for the purpose of pushing down stock prices risks triggering a globally financial crisis. An investment bubble, once pricked, tends to deflate rather rapidly. Furthermore, of the US economy does not seem to justify a rise in interest rates. So for the time being all Mr Greenspan can do is jump on his soap box and thump the table. He's right, of course, but when did being right mean anything to financial markets.

It is hard to imagine a company more devoted to corporate purpose than BAT Industries. There it stands, a throwback to a bygone age in which diversification into unrelated businesses was thought a perfectly

acceptable and legitimate management exercise. Not for BAT modern day management concepts like "focus" and concentrating on "core competences". Despite some tinkering that at times has been well intentioned "Ahoy there" breakup bid from Sir James Goldsmith and Jacob Rothschild in the early 1990s, little has really changed. BAT has stuck with its two wholly different businesses of insurance and cigarettes.

Nor has it any intention of changing. That in any case is what Martin Broughton, the chief executive, said less than two months ago at the time of the last set of results. BAT would only demerge if it resulted in significant cash flow benefits, and thus far he could not see how that would be the case.

What, then, to make of well sourced rumours this week that BAT was indeed thinking of demerging its Eagle Star, Allied Dunbar and Farmers insurance arm as part of a separate merger of these interests with Commercial Union or some such other large rival insurance concern? On the face of it, this variant of the demerger option might make sense where a straight demerger wouldn't, for it would enable the company to take advantage of the international trend in consolidation of financial services and insurance. As a result demerger might add some value for shareholders.

BAT explored the idea quite extensively but ultimately this proved one of those deals

destined to end up in the dustbin, for apparently all talks have now been terminated. So does it make sense for BAT to go this route? Ironically, what makes sense for BAT may not necessarily make sense for its insurance business. My view has always been that demerger is a good thing in its own right, for it does indeed bring about greater responsibility and focus in management. In the short term, the benefits of this are intangible, but over the years it can make a very sizeable difference.

As for merging the insurance operation with another large insurance concern, it is hard to know whether this makes sense without knowing what is proposed. But the general case for big is beautiful is as unproven in insurance as in any other industry. The business of selling insurance is undergoing very rapid and radical change. Most insurers have quite enough on their hands already in terms of cost cutting, reorganisation and restructuring, without having to deal with the trauma of a big merger.

Some insurers, such as John Robins, chief executive of Guardian Royal Exchange, have gone so far as positively to rule it out. So BAT may be barking up the wrong tree by offering up its insurance business to the fashion for merger and consolidation. Demerger by all means. But demerger to merge again? That's perhaps not such a good idea.

OFT grants City more time to cut rights costs

Peter Rodgers
Financial Editor

The launch of half a dozen cut-price rights issues since the summer has staved off the immediate threat of a monopolies inquiry into the City's charges for raising capital for companies, the Office of Fair Trading said yesterday.

But John Bridgeman, director general of Fair Trading, made it clear that an investigation by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission was still a possibility, and he was to make a final decision by the end of next March.

Mr Bridgeman said that in the light of "real but limited progress" in reducing City underwriting commissions, especially through a new auction process, he would not refer the market to the MMC "at present".

However, a handful of innovative rights issues was not enough to make a judgement that the problems identified by his predecessor, Sir Bryan Cusack, had been resolved. The OFT believes commissions are

excessive in relation to the risks borne by underwriters.

He urged companies to take advantage of the increased willingness of the City to offer flexible terms rather than fixed fees, and to increase the pressure on their advisers for reductions.

He also urged companies to insist that their merchant bank advisers do not take the role of lead underwriter, to eliminate conflict of interest.

In addition, Mr Bridgeman stepped up the OFT's campaign to persuade companies to make deeply discounted rights issues that require no underwriting.

The announcement was the latest stage in a campaign waged by the OFT against the City's long-established system of fixed underwriting and sub-underwriting commissions for rights issues, which total 2 per cent of the value of an issue plus a top up for longer underwriting periods.

An OFT survey up to May this year, published by Mr Bridgeman's announcement, found there had been little response to pressure for lower charges.



John Bridgeman: Progress in reducing underwriting commissions means no referral to MMC at present

Since then leading City institutions and merchant banks have come to an agreement on a broad strategy to head off the threatened reference.

The first fruit was a rights issue by Mercury Asset Management for Cairn Energy in June, when the sub-underwriting commission was slashed to 0.5 per cent from the standard 1.25 per cent.

The breakthrough in winning the reprieve was a series of five innovative deals starting in late October with a rights issue by Schroders for Stakis, which included an auction of part of the underwriting. This saved the company a significant amount of money. Schroders has organised one more auction and Kleinwort Benson has done this.

Mr Bridgeman said developments since May represented a "first tentative step towards reform in this market" and he particularly welcomed the auction. He praised the Association of British Insurers, the National Association of Pension Funds and the London Investment Banking Association for backing them.

He also welcomed their new willingness to adjust dividends per share downwards to take account of the fact that a rights issue at a discount effectively includes a scrip issue of free shares.

Donald Anderson, former finance director of film and television company Goldcrest, was yesterday sentenced to two years' imprisonment for a conspiracy to defraud of £19m in bogus profits at the former Brent Walker subsidiary.

Anderson, who on Thursday was found guilty by a London court of perverting the course of justice, was also disqualified from acting as a company director for five years.

He was paid a total of £700,000 to cover up "profits" recorded in the accounts of Brent Walker. This involved a

complex route taking in the US, Switzerland and the Isle of Man. He collected the payments in bearer bonds and cash in Geneva, including sums laundered through the Bahamas and Liechtenstein.

In jailing Anderson, 43, of Richmond, Surrey, Judge Michael Harris said: "For what it is worth I thought the evidence against you was overwhelming. Your fingerprints were, in effect, all over the cover-up."

He continued: "I must send a message to the business world that the courts will punish businessmen who do not behave with honesty and integrity."

Merger with Triplex Lloyd may net William Cook chief £1.5m

Patrick Toohy

The chairman and chief executive of William Cook stands to make up to £1.5m if a hostile £58m bid by Triplex Lloyd for the steel castings group succeeds.

Andrew Cook is entitled to the huge pay-off under the terms of a service agreement signed in 1991, details of which are contained in the company's defence document published yesterday.

Mr Cook, who is on a five-year rolling contract, will receive the lower of five times his annual salary or £1.5m if he resigns or is dismissed within a year of William Cook changing own-

ership. Mr Cook's service contract shows he enjoys an annual salary of £350,000 but his pay could double under the terms of a controversial bonus scheme which was amended on Wednesday.

Mr Cook defended his potential pay-off. "It's not excessive, in fact I think it is a pittance," he said.

"It's a pretty small price to pay to have your life's work taken off you."

"It is not as if I have wrecked the company and been paid off," he continued.

"Shareholders would have lost all their money if it hadn't been for me."

He admitted that William

Cook had met the financial targets attached to his performance-related bonus "every year". But he added: "I could have doubled my salary but I've never paid myself anything of that magnitude in the past because I have exercised restraint."

Mr Cook also moved to head off criticism of his autocratic style of management by announcing plans to split the role of chairman and chief executive and to appoint at least one new non-executive director if the Triplex Lloyd bid lapses.

"If the company's value has been depressed because I am not what I should be corporate governance-wise then I am go-

ing to have to change," he said. "I have agreed to eliminate this issue by adopting best practice so it doesn't muddy the waters."

William Cook forecast a "substantial improvement" in profits for the year to March 1997 and claimed it is worth twice Triplex Lloyd's 31.2p cash and shares bid.

The forecast was immediately attacked by Triplex Lloyd. Noting remarks made by Mr Cook at the interim stage about a "bip" in order books chief executive, Graham Lockyer, said: "The miracle that has occurred in the past six weeks is unbelievable. Paul Daniels would be proud of him."

Alenia joins up on Airbus jumbo

Nigel Cope

The prospect of a new partner in Airbus Industrie, the European plane-maker, drew closer yesterday when it agreed a link-up with Alenia, the Italian group, to help build a planned 550-seater jetliner. Alenia described its participation in the "superjumbo" as the "first step towards taking an equity stake in Airbus".

Airbus has been seeking outside capital because it estimates the huge jet, dubbed the A3XX, would cost more than \$8bn (£5bn) to develop. Industry experts suggest the figure could top \$12bn. Airbus hopes the superjumbo could eventually supplant the Boeing 747 as the world's premier large plane.

A spokesman for British Aerospace, which controls 20 per cent of Airbus, said: "The agreement provides for Alenia to draw nearer to Airbus. As part of the broadening evolution of the Airbus partnership it is expected that Alenia will be increasing its participation in Airbus strategically and organisationally."

Alenia, which is part of the Italian defence group Finmeccanica, is also expected to be involved in the development of a 100-seater regional jet in partnership with Singapore and China. Alenia will continue its es-

tablished participation in the Airbus military transport programme. It will also be asked to participate in the programmes of new derivatives from existing aircraft such as the A340-600.

Airbus, which is based in Toulouse in France, will this month produce a binding agreement on plans to re-shape itself as a stand-alone company by 1999. It is currently a loose confederation of manufacturers, a structure which analysts say leads to higher costs than arch-rival Boeing.

Airbus is currently 38 per cent owned by Germany's Daimler Benz, Aerospaciale of France also has 38 per cent with 20 per cent held by the UK's BAe and 4 per cent by Casa of Spain.

Airbus has also indicated the possibility of Saab of Sweden becoming a potential partner. "We have an interest and we have been approached and we are discussing it," Lars Jagerfeldt, a Saab spokesman, said. Airbus spokesman David Voskuhl said the company would not rule out adding Saab as a partner but said it was actively seeking additional partnerships worldwide.

In the first half of this year Boeing's stake of the world market for passenger jets with at least 100 seats was 57 per cent compared with Airbus' 37.7 per cent. Boeing's advantage is in jumbo jets which seat more than 400 passengers.

IN BRIEF

• The Federal Communications Commission is ready to grant MCI Communications a direct-broadcast satellite licence. MCI would receive final authorisation to provide the video service upon payment of the balance of the \$683m (£416m) bid for the licence, the agency said. The FCC said the decision "is entirely separate and distinct from the decisions it will make next year" regarding MCI's proposed merger with British Telecom.

• Chrysalis, the records to radio group which recently lost two of its non-executive directors after a boardroom row, warned investors not to expect any profits until 1998 as it revealed a slump into the red for the year to August. Chris Wright, the football impresario who chairs the group, blamed losses of £5.36m on a £6.7m "investment" in start-up costs at the group's Heart radio stations in the Midlands and London and its fledgling Echo record label. He said further start-up losses in both businesses meant the group would be loss-making next year, but was "quietly hopeful" about 1997/98. Chrysalis made profits of £1.01m in 1994/95. The group is maintaining the final dividend at 2.75p.

• Wolverhampton & Dudley, Britain's largest regional brewer, shrugged off the disappointment of its poor first-half yesterday with a 7 per cent rise in full-year profits to £43m alongside plans to expand its "concept" pubs. The group will open another 39 brand outlets next year including Milestone pub restaurants, Fast Eddie's bars and Lax Word Czech-style café bars. It plans to spend at least \$8m supporting its Bank's bitter and Strongarm brands this year.

• Greenalls has sold its six hotels in the US to the Shaner Hotel Group of State College, Pennsylvania for £14m cash. Book value of the hotels is £13.5m and, after costs of disposal and settlement of contractual arrangements, the loss on the sale is £1.75m.

• Dutch soccer star and Chelsea manager Ruud Geulink is to have a range of casual clothing named after him under a five-year deal with UK sports and leisurewear firm Hay & Robertson. He will be paid an initial six-figure sum and also receive a royalty on worldwide sales. The company plans to produce a wide range of leisure clothing under the "Ruud" label of its Admiral brand.

• London brewer Fuller, Smith & Turner recorded only a modest increase in profits to £5.2m last year with the performance held back by a 3 per cent fall in beer volumes in the tied estate and lower margins in the Wine Company off-licence chain. The main areas of growth were Free Trade with sales to the take-home trade, the group's hotels and managed estate. Group sales rose from £44m to £49m.

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	D-Mark	Spot	1 month	3 months
US	1.5275	9.7	36.93	1000	—	—	—
Canada	2.216	54.49	164.96	13589	24.23	75.73	—
Germany	2.5302	89.61	203.98	15547	30.28	90.47	10000
France	6.5480	217.98	640.408	3.2222	86.61	285.26	33784
Italy	2.0651	31.45	120.38	18331	28.35	91.01	—
Japan	163.16	95.91	281.278	12.54	48.47	149.147	72.9839
Spain	163.16	95.91	281.278	12.54	48.47	149.147	72.9839
Belgium	52.57	15.10	42.36	32.047	7.5	20.17	20.9140
Denmark	9.9828	222.177	655.559	3.5655	89.79	285.97	3.5655
Netherlands	2.5301	89.61	203.98	1.783	38.37	121.15	12.17
Norway	0.854	5.1	15.10	16.550	6.3	19.69	0.854
Sweden	10.597	160.40	380.270	6.0048	50.25	159.69	4.914
Switzerland	2.144	65.75	238.228	6.8177	47.15	152.91	4.914
Australia	2.005	13.16	35.25	13.74	40.37	128.14	0.84
Hong Kong	12.584	83.52	240.183	7.225	14.16	33.35	4.057
Malaysia	4.028	0.0	0.0	2.820	27.30	90.45	1.913
New Zealand	2.335	64.71	155.98	14.215	54.46	97.49	12.74
Saudi Arabia	6.040	0.0	0.0	3.7505	24.4	74.45	0.905
Singapore	2.280	0.0	0.0	14.015	24.5	74.45	0.905

Other Spot Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Country	Spot	1 month	3 months
Argentina	12.678	0.9999	—	Nigeria	228.94	—	—
Austria	17.022	10.994	—	Oman	0.6288	—	—
Brazil	1.6948	12.049	—	Pakistan	55.250	—	—
China	15.545	8.203	—	Philippines	42.816	—	—
Egypt	1.5401	3.4021	—	Portugal	255.948	—	—
Finland	7.5751	4.6530	—	Russia	5.9947	—	—
Greece	27.844	17.000	—	South Africa	7.9508	—	—
India	39.600	24.494	—	Taiwan	44.826	—	—
Indonesia	56.227	35.820	—	UAE	5.578	—	—
Kuwait	0.4587	0.8002	—	—	—	—	—

Forward rates quoted high to low rate at a discount; subtract from spot rate; add to spot rate.
Dollar rates quoted as at 10:00 am; all other rates as at 10:00 am.
For the latest foreign exchange rates call 089 123 3083.
Cable cost 50p per minute (telex) 45p per minute.

Interest Rates

UK	Base	500%	Germany	Discount	2.50%	US	Prime	8.75%	Japan	Discount	0.50%
France	3.50%	—	Canada	4.50%	—	France	5.00%	—	Belgium	Discount	2.50%
Italy	—	—	Spain	4.75%	—	Italy	5.25%	—	Canada	Discount	10.0%
Netherlands	2.50%	—	Sweden	5.00%	—	Netherlands	5.00%	—	Switzerland	Discount	10.0%
Advances	2.50%	—	Denmark	3.25%	—	Advances	5.00%	—	Sweden	Discount	10.0%
—	—	—	Repo (Ave)	4.00%	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Bond Yields

Country	5yr	10yr	15yr	20yr	Country	5yr	10yr	15yr	20yr
UK	7.1%	7.3%	7.7%	7.9%	Netherlands	8.1%	8.1%	8.1%	8.1%
US	5.1%	6.0%	6.50%	6.57	Spain	8.40%	8.30	8.30%	8.37
Japan	5.5%	5.5%	5.4%	5.4%	Italy	8.8%	8.8%	8.8%	8.8%
Australia	6.1%	7.1%	7.3%	7.4%	Sweden	9.4%	9.4%	9.4%	9.4%
Germany	8.0%	8.4%	8.25%	8.1%	Belgium	10.5%	10.5%	10.5%	10.5%
France	5.1%	4.7%	4.7%	4.7%	Denmark	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%

Money Market Rates

Overnight	1 Day	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year
Interbank	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%
Local Authority	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%
Discount Market	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%
Treasury Bills (3yr)	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%
Dollar Bill	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%
EUU United Dep	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%	5.1%

Tourist Rates

2 Buys	1 Buys	1 Buys	1 Buys	1 Buys	1 Buys
Australia (Dollars)	22.000	France (Francs)	84.000	New Zealand (Dollars)	22.700
Austria (Schillings)	17.500	Germany (Mark)	24.000	Norway (Krones)	104.500
Belgium (Francs)	51.500	Germany (Mark)	24.000	Portugal (Escudos)	202.700
Canada (Dollars)	2.000	Hong Kong (Dollars)	24.000	Spain (Pesetas)	166.700
Denmark (Krones)	17.500	India (Rupees)	24.000	Sweden (Krones)	104.500
Finland (Mark)	22.000	Japan (Yen)	24.000	Switzerland (Francs)	2.000
France (Francs)	84.000	Malaysia (Ringgits)	24.000	Taiwan (New Dollars)	104.500
Germany (Mark)	24.000	Malta (Lira)	0.800	United States (Dollars)	1.000

Liffe Financial Futures

Contract	Settlement price	High/Low	Open Interest	Settlement price	High/Low	Open Interest
Long Oil	124.35	123.35	123.7	2400	2400	2400
German Gov Bd	124.35	123.35	123.7	2400	2400	2400
Italian Gov Bd	124.35	123.35	123.7	2400	2400	2400
Japan Gov Bd	124.35	123.35	123.7	2400	2400	2400
UK 5 Year	124.35	123.35	123.7	2400	2400	2400
5 Mth Eurodollar	124.35	123.35	123.7	2400	2400	2400
9 Mth Eurodollar	124.35	123.35	123.7	2400	2400	2400
3 Mth Eurodollar	124.35	123.35	123.7	2400	2400	2400
5 Mth Eurodollar	124.35	123.35	123.7	2400	2400	2400
3 Mth Eurodollar	124.35	123.35	123.7	2400	2400	2400
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5 Mth Eurodollar	124.35	123.35	123.7	2400	2400	2400
3 Mth Eurodollar	124.35	123.35	12			

market report / shares

Data Bank

FTSE 100
3963.0 -88.2

FTSE 250
4348.1 -87.7

FTSE 350
1969.3 -42.9

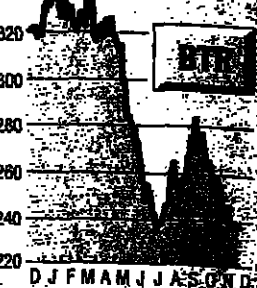
SEAQ VOLUME
726.3m shares,

43,403 bargains

Gifts Index
n/a

Share spotlight

share price, pence



City fears a Black Monday could follow Grey Friday

MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

stock market reporter of the year

It was not quite the biggest fall since the nightmarish 1987 crash. Even so, it was a panic-stricken day as the stock market wondered whether the Government was about to disintegrate and fretted about the emotive language used by US banking chief Alan Greenspan.

At one time Footsie was down a staggering 168.5 points. It ended 88.2 lower at 3,963, wiping Datastream calculated, more than £20bn from company values. Footsie's worst post-crash fall was 103.4 points four years ago. The supporting 250 index, at one time down 116, ended off 87.7 at 4,348.1.

Selling was occasionally heavy. Many private investors, fearing the start of a collapse of confidence, locked in at least some of their profits.

Investment strategists, however, were inclined to be unfazed by it all, a necessary

correction offering a buying opportunity, they felt.

Shares started the day in disarray on the Tory turmoil and Mr Greenspan's overnight talk of stock market's as a "collapsing financial asset bubble". His comments must mean, it was reasoned, that the US non-farm payroll figures would trigger interest rate increases. In the event the job figures were not as high as feared.

So New York's response was not so dramatic as expected. The feared slump was during London opening, 143 points at its worst, a far cry from the talk of a 500 crash.

Footsie's rally from the depths, a recovery of 80.2, is unlikely to be carried through on Monday. Indeed, there are fears Grey Friday could be followed by Black Monday. The general view is that shares will open lower with suggestions of a snap new year election and

the suspicion another interest rate increase is near drowning any enthusiasm. Even so, ever the optimist, the market remains hopeful the present upheaval will be a relatively brief aberration and it will still experience a Christmas rally - but possibly from a rather lower base than seemed likely a few weeks ago.

Government stocks took a hammering. At one time they were down more than £2. A late rally cut falls to nearer £1½.

In turnover terms it was a profitable day for the market with trading topping 700 million. And Tradepoint, the fledgling rival to the market,

had its best day with deals worth £12m against the previous record of £9.5m.

There is no doubt the upset has frightened many of the less experienced takeover players. Some stockbrokers were fretting about punters who have long-term T-25 trades. "There could, if shares continue to wilt, be a run of defaulters," bemoaned one private client broker.

Only one Footsie constituent managed to advance. BTR, for long in the doldrums, gained 7p to 237.5p as it long-awaited trading statement turned out to be more encouraging than expected.

On any other day the shares

would have enjoyed a heady double-digit advance.

Rolls-Royce, the aero engineer, was the biggest Footsie faller, dropping 12.5p to 238p. Some of the takeover candidates were hard hit: Standard Chartered, the banking group, retreated 33.5p to 663.5p; GRE 11.5p to 263p and Prudential Corporation 19.5p to 481p.

Zeneca, at one time down 70p, ended 49.5p off at 1,581.5p. House of Fraser fell 10.5p to 161p.

Analyst comments were largely lost in the resounding crash. ABN Amro Hoare Govett produced a 950p target price for BOC, the chemical group, but watched the price fall 16.5p to 897p.

Merrill Lynch downgraded profit expectations at Booker, the food group, helping the shares 11.5p lower to 402.5p.

Even a spark of takeover ac-

tion failed to create much in-

spiration. Northern Electric gained just 1p to 602.5p as bidder CE Electric, the US utility, raised its offer to 650p. The Americans have 29.9 per cent of Northern. Whitehall is expected to pronounce on the bid later this month.

Widney, the specialist engineer, added 2p to 62p as SEP Industrial declared a 5.46 per cent stake. A profit warning last month pushed the shares.

Snakeboard, the leisure group, held at 3.75p after placing 2 million shares at 3p.

Haemocell, the struggling healthcare group, slumped 4p to 9p; it produced losses of £1.2m and plans to raise £2m through a placing and open offer at 3p.

Taking Stock

□ Caspian, owner of Leeds United football club, firmed 0.25p to 32p. Fidelity International has built a 4.29 per cent interest and there is talk a US investor, who could join the board, is shopping for a significant share stake. New stockbrokers may be appointed. Merrill Lynch, already Manchester United's broker, could join Caspian's City team.

□ Lynx, the computer group, fell 2.5p to 81p. Stockbroker Greig Middleton has nudged up its profit forecasts to £9.3m this year and £11.5m next. It rates the shares a buy.

□ Trouble at Woodstock, the Odeon pub company, Bass, the brewing giant, has appointed a receiver to Woodstock's Kingston Inn subsidiary, which has 45 pubs. Woodstock shares are suspended at 15p.

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items. Other details: Ex Rights = Ex-dividend; Ex All = All United Securities Market's Suspended; Up Party Paid pm; Nil Field Shares; 2 AM Stock

The Independent Index

The index allows you to access real-time share prices by phone from Sat. Simply dial 091 123 333, followed by the 4-digit code printed next to each share. To access the latest financial reports dial 091 1233 followed by one of the two-digit codes below.

FTSE 100 - Real-time	00	Starting Rates	04	Privatisation Issues	36
UK Stock Market Report	01	Bullion Report	05	Water Shares	37
UK Company News	02	Wall St Report	06	Security Shares	40
Foreign Exchange	03	Tokyo Market	07	High Street Banks	41

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A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

SUPERLEAGUE: Air Scotland Eagles v Brackley Bulls (6.30); Cardiff Devils v Sheffield Steelers (6.30); Nottingham Panthers v Basingstoke Bison (7.00).

TODAY'S NUMBER

80

The hours Real Madrid fans spent queuing for tickets for tonight's Spanish League game with Barcelona. The patient supporters were visited at 1.30am by full-back Roberto Carlos and Real chairman Lorenzo Sarr, armed with coffee and sandwiches.

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sport

Henman tipped to go all the way

Tennis

ADRIAN WARNER
reports from Munich

Britain's Tim Henman, who has enjoyed the most lucrative week of his life at the Grand Slam Cup, is capable of getting to the very top, Boris Becker's former coach said yesterday.

Henman, who faces Becker in the first of Saturday's semi-finals of the \$5m (£3.75m) event where \$812,500 will be at stake, plays some shots like the world No 1, Pete Sampras, according to Germany's Davis Cup coach, Niki Pilić.

"When I first saw him some of his strokes reminded me of Pete Sampras," said Pilić who has worked with some of the best players in the game. "He is capable of getting into the top 10."

Henman, ranked 29th in the world, has already earned \$431,250 for reaching the last four of the richest tournament in tennis, doubling his earnings for the year. He is the biggest surprise of the event which pays out \$1.625m to the winner.

The Briton gave a commanding display of serving in a quarter-final defeat of Wimbledon finalist MaliVai Washington on Thursday. Today's match with Becker is arguably the biggest test of his career.

Pilić, who has worked closely with Becker for many years, said it was not impossible that the Briton might cause an upset.

But he faces an immense task against the three-times Wimbledon champion who is playing some of the best tennis of his life and has the advantage of playing in front of his fanatical home supporters.

"It is possible [that Henman could win]," Pilić said. "But it would be a very big surprise. Boris is playing so well. He is serving so well and he has a lot of confidence. But it is not impossible."

Becker is taking nothing for granted against the Briton and was training hard for the match on Friday. "Once you get to the stage of playing a semi-final, whoever you are going to play will have won two tough matches already," the German said. "At



Racket amusement: Goran Ivanisevic has a laugh during his win over Mark Woodforde yesterday. Photograph: Reuter

that stage the name doesn't matter anymore."

Henman himself admits: "I need to get fitter and stronger to build up my stamina and enable me to play rallies of 50 strokes like you have to do in Paris."

But Henman knows that against Becker he will have no such problems. The rallies against the big-serving German should be extremely short. Becker is not a man of unlimited patience. He has one of the biggest serves in the game and if Henman is to stand any chance of victory in this best-of-five-sets semi-final he must match his opponent in serving power.

The defending champion, Goran Ivanisevic, used his big serve to cruise into the semi-finals for the fourth time yesterday by beating Mark Woodforde 6-4, 6-4.

Ivanisevic blasted 16 aces past the Australian doubles specialist. Already the ace leader on the tour, yesterday's performance took him past the 1,500 mark - to 1,511 aces for the year.

"It's going to be tough to break this record, even by me," Ivanisevic said. "It means that I have the best serve in the game."

GRAND SLAM CUP (Munich) Quarter-final: G Ivanisevic (CRO) vs M Woodforde (AUS) 6-4, 6-4.



Henman reflects on his performance in the quarter-final.

Holgate joins new cherry and whites

Rugby League

DAVE HADFIELD

Wigan got their man yesterday signing Stephen Holgate, the Workington second row, for £100,000. "We have been chasing him for almost 12 months and we're delighted he's coming to Wigan," Joe Lydon, the club's football manager, said.

His style will suit Wigan down to the ground. We want competition for places - to get back to the situation of two internationals for every shirt."

The 24-year-old Holgate, capped by England in 1995, was equally delighted to get his

dream move from his native Cumbria. "I think I'll stop doing the lottery now, because I feel as though I've won it," he said.

Holgate stopped short of declaring he had always wanted to play in the cherry and white hoops, which was just as well on a day which saw Wigan unveil a new strip of cherry and white swirls with a tasteful horned helmet motif.

Salford believe that Holgate should be playing in their shade of red next season. They claim that Wigan should not have been allowed to sign the player while they still owed Salford a £10,000 increment on the fee for Terry O'Connor.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"I wouldn't know, because I'd have jumped off the stand. Francis Lee, the Manchester City chairman, when asked what the club's finances would be like if City were relegated this season.

"Our media have described them as amateurs and chicken farmers. We know they are good players and treat them as such. Willie Atherton, the England cricket captain, after the seven-wicket defeat by Maharashtra.

"It was pure luck. Peter Schmeichel on his save against Rapid Vienna which is being compared to the one by Gordon Banks from Pele in the 1970 World Cup.

"I'll be doing my best. I haven't had the best of luck against Germany in semi-final meetings. Tim Henman, the British tennis No 1, on his meeting with Boris Becker in today's semi-finals of the Ondaque Grand Slam Cup in Munich.

"There is definitely a lack of rotation. Andre Agassi, former world No 1, after the defeat of Mark Woodforde at the same event.

"I can't say no to Becker. I can only resign. I'm not resigning. Arigo Sacchi, manager of Milan, after his team's defeat by Lazio in the Italian league.

Reading attempt to halt worrying slide

Hockey

BILL COLWILL

Reading, once Premier Division leaders, visit Old Loughtonians tomorrow having lost their last three League games. Already without the international Howard Hoskin, who will be missing for the next six months with a stress fracture, his fellow England colleagues Mark Pearn and Simon Mason have injuries and are doubtful. New Zealanders Grant Edwards has also gone home for Christmas.

Julian Halls returns for Old Loughtonians following the two-match suspension given by his club in the knowledge that Essex has extended the punishment to 16 days. Halls is

appealing against the suspension. Kalbir Takher is missing from the squad of the League leaders, Cannock, at Guildford as he is still under suspension.

The much-awaited return of Rob Hill to Havant's side is at Swinton in the day's relegation battle. Havant won their first point of the season in a 3-3 draw against Old Loughtonians last weekend.

Surbiton, one place above Havant, have added David Main, the former Hounslow player, to their squad and hope that their captain, Martin Constable, will return after glandular fever.

Second-placed Southgate make a short trip to Bedlington, for whom Nick Conway returned last weekend with two goals in the cup victory over Gore Court.

Royals struggling to end 16-match slump

Basketball

RICHARD TAYLOR

Hemel and Watford Royals chase their first Budweiser League win of the season live on satellite TV tomorrow night, against a Crystal Palace team that will be under strength despite giving a debut to their new American, Paul Grant.

Grant, a 23-year-old point guard, replaces his sacked countryman Tim Garrett, and Palace will be without another American, Anthony Joseph, who has returned to New York for family reasons. Grant, who was signed on Thursday, averaged 13 points and three assists per game for Baltimore's Morgan State University last season.

to be the leading scorer on his team.

Palace go into the game with one American against a Hemel team who, despite a full quota of five, have suffered 16 successive defeats in League, Trophy and National Cup.

"It's official, we're in a slump," Vince Razaq, the Royals' owner and coach, said. "On paper his team face an even tougher task than when Palace beat them 101-93 in the Trophy in October, before the London club had signed any Americans or the England centre Jason Crump.

Palace could be further strengthened soon after inviting the American Edwin Harmon to join them this weekend for a trial from the Irish League.

HYPERION

12.25 Fine Str 12.55 Liqueur 1.25 Goldenswift 1.55 OATIS ROSE (nap) 2.25 Rectory Garden 3.00 Jack Gallagher 3.35 Welsh Silk

GOING: Good (chase course); Good to Soft (hurdle course). All Right-hand, undulating circuit. Run-in of 140yd.

Course on all south-east of town. Race starts from Northampton station. ADMITTANCE: Members £12; Terraces 50p (GA's 50p); Course 54p (plus all occupants £18). CASH PAID: Free.

12.25

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NOTES OF THE WEEK

Bay in a Group Three event on heavy ground at Saint-Cloud over a mile, will be hard to beat though his ability to act on this surface must be taken on trust.

difficult for Decorated
 1 003 DORRIS-0 (39) W Jones 9 D...
 2 FRONT VIEW B Lowenthal 9 A Clark
 3 045 HEVER-GUY DANCER (48) J Naughton 9 D... D Holland
 4 001 JAY-OVE-THO (39) R Whelan 9 D... D Holland
 5 0 PEE EXPRESS (39) P Francis 9 D... P Gould (7)
 6 000540 VILLAGE PUB (38) R Cunningham-Br 9 S Sanders 2
 7 032 PATINA (35) M Tompkins 9 B... 6 DeWitt
 8 03 PATINA (22) R Mohrman 9 B... J Lynch (3)
 9 = 8 Deleted =
 BETTINGS: 2-1 Village, 5-2 Double-0, 8-1 Hever-Guy Dancer, Jay-Ove-Tho
 Patina, 3-1 Chymn Post, 16-1 others

The Sporting Life

sport

Newcastle United's new defensive guru tells **Glenn Moore** how he survived and prospered after the nightmare of the Maxwell years

Lawrenson tunes in to Toon philosophy

It was the summer of 1988, Mark Lawrenson was manager of Oxford United and Kevin Maxwell was his chairman.

Lawrenson recalls: "I had agreed a deal with Graeme Souness to buy Jimmy Phillips, who's now at Bolton, from Rangers. Kevin was on the boat, the one Robert [Maxwell] was on when he died. I rang ship-to-shore and the voice at the other end was Robert who was then chairman of Derby County."

Lawrenson then does a passable impression of Maxwell's famous booming voice as he relates: "He said 'Hello'. I said 'Mr Maxwell, it's Mark Lawrenson, can I speak to Kevin.'"

"Speak to me."

"Well, it involves one of our players."

"Speak to me."

"Well, Kevin's my chairman."

"Speak to me."

"I spoke to him," said Lawrenson. "I told him about Phillips and he went: 'Done.' So the Derby County chairman had just agreed for Oxford United to buy a full-back from Glasgow Rangers. That," added Lawrenson, "just about summed up the situation."

No wonder Lawrenson agreed when Kevin Keegan asked him to work with Newcastle United's defence. After dealing with the Maxwells even the prospect of getting David Ginola to defend cannot seem that daunting.

"I'm enjoying it. It is nice to be back in the game - and in this capacity. I didn't expect it. I'd carved out my own career in the media."

We were talking in Vienna where Lawrenson was preparing to work for BBC Radio at Manchester United's Champions' League tie with Rapid Vienna. His media work also includes Sky TV and a newspaper column.

Newcastle is the priority. The previous night he had watched them beat Metz in the UEFA Cup and when we returned to Manchester, Airport in the early hours of Thursday morning he drove straight to his new home in Gosforth to help prepare for Monday's match with Nottingham Forest.

"It was a surprise," he recalled. "I went up to do an interview with Keith Gillespie for Sky. As we were doing it a story broke about [Faustino] Asprilla being late back so I asked Kevin a few questions on that."

"The following day I got a message to ring Terry McDermott urgently. I thought, 'Oh no. They're objecting to something we asked.' When Terry said 'Kevin wants to speak to you' I was sure they were. Then Kevin asked if I wanted to get back in it."

"I am primarily involved with the defenders though I speak to all the



Mark Lawrenson (left) makes a point to Darren Peacock before Newcastle's recent game against Middlesbrough at the Riverside Stadium

Photograph: Will Walker

players. I have not really worked with them. It is more a case of trying to make salient points. They now come to me after a game and ask about certain incidents, what they did, what they should have done. They have responded well. It is great when you consider some of their fiercest critics."

Lawrenson, like Keegan, does not use video - "players always know exactly what happened" - but he has had to get used to supporters watching training. "In a way it helps. You have always got the players' attention. They know they are on show."

There is also Keegan's current penchant for playing three centre-backs and attacking wing-backs to deal with.

"Kevin likes to think there are not many teams playing with wingers, why not play that way? It gives us

width, inventiveness and numbers in midfield which help us win the ball back when we lose it. It is a case of making everybody aware of their responsibilities."

"A lot falls upon the two wing-backs. We are trying to convince Glenn that it is the way to play. He has never played that way before and I think he finds it difficult. When people run past him, to have to track them back. On Tuesday he did it well for us. We know we are not going to get him running 50 yards and slide in and make a tackle. What we are saying to him is that when we lose the ball make sure you run back 10 yards to save yourself running 40 later on. If the full-back is aware that you are going to go with him he is going to stop going after a while."

A quick run through the video suggests Ginola did track back

more against Metz than against Arsenal but there were times when his lack of defensive nous was exposed. He does not come automatically to mind as it has done to Gillespie. Lawrenson admitted: "There are times when he thinks that maybe it is not him going forward but he does not do it. It is a good system."

More generally, said Lawrenson, his aim is to "make them think pessimistically" - the what-if syndrome? "Ultimately you are trying to get them to prevent danger rather than react to it. The good defenders are the ones who make sure there is not a problem in the first place."

"In Europe you have to be very patient. Attackers are used to playing against man-markers and they look to pull you out of position. All we say to people like [Philippe] Albert and [Darren] Peacock is that, 99 per cent of the time, if you don't get pulled out of position we should be OK."

One thing Lawrenson does not tell his pupils is how Liverpool did it. "We never talk about it, not to players. It does not have any relevance and if you don't, I think players respect you more. Kevin, Terry and I might tell a few stories to ourselves, 'do you remember when', but very rarely do we say 'if that had been Liverpool in the 80s...'"

Lawrenson did not play with Keegan but is credited for persuading him to retire. Keegan went back to Anfield with Newcastle for an FA Cup tie in 1984 and was comprehensively outplayed by Lawrenson. Afterwards he decided it was his last season. "Maybe this is his way of getting revenge," Lawrenson said.

Lawrenson, who also played for Preston, Brighton and the Republic of Ireland (38 caps) retired at 30 with an Achilles tendon injury in 1988. While Liverpool went on to be champions, he took over at relegation-bound Oxford making him the answer to the teaser: who won a championship medal and was relegated in the same season? (He once asked this question of the press corps then enjoyed the many wrong answers before someone realised.)

He was at Oxford seven months. "It was an experience and an education," he said. "I'm glad I did it. In a surreal way I enjoyed it. I don't know if there will be the like of Robert Maxwell again."

"I dealt with Kevin but when there was a major decision it obviously went to his father. I would ring

Kevin up about trying to sign someone and he would say 'I will get back to you'. And he spoke to dad. As part of the empire it was understandable."

"The thing I learned straight away was that whatever Robert Maxwell did he had to think he was getting a deal. So if I needed £200,000 to buy a player I had to get the message through that they were asking for £300,000."

The relationship was never likely to prosper and Lawrenson left when Dean Saunders was sold against his will - after Lawrenson had been promised he could keep him for the season and told season-ticket buyers the same.

"He went in October, we were seventh and at home to Blackburn. I arrived and Kevin told me, 'I know what we agreed but Saunders has to speak to Derby after the game'. Obviously his dad had been on. Derby had been on the phone a few times about Saunders but others fancied him too."

"Dean signed that night. I voiced my opinion to Kevin and he said 'speak to my father'. The next day I went up to the penthouse at the Mirror building. He sat right next to me, very close, on a Chinese in-laid coffee table. It looked very expensive and it started to buckle. I thought 'this could be funny, if it was not for the situation it could be very funny'."

"He said: 'What's your problem young man?' I said: 'You know what my problem is and came out with all this rhetoric about Saunders and promises to me and the season-ticket holders. He said: 'It's got nothing to do with you' and walked out."

"I went home and decided to resign. The next day I went back with Brian Horton, my assistant. He was whisked off straight away to offer the job (I'd already told him to take it if they did). I kept waiting for an hour. Kevin walked in, threw this piece of paper at me and told me I was being sacked for telling the press I was resigning - which was not true. I said, 'If you're happy throwing that at me, I'm sorry'. His parting shot was, 'Nobody resigns on Robert Maxwell'."

Lawrenson's most surprising tale is a confession. "The best thing that happened to me in football was signing for Preston. I was born in and went to school in Preston. My dad played for Preston, my stepfather was a director, my mother had watched Preston for most of her life. The day I played for the first team was probably the best."

"Liverpool supporters say 'How can you say that? You won the League five times, you won the European Cup'. But, from the age of four or five, that was all I ever wanted. The rest was a bonus."

No 195 Belgian football

FAN'S EYE VIEW

by Lee Osborne and David Dunne

We're accustomed to it all by now. After all, the question is always the same: "Why Belgian football?" Which is usually said in varying tones of stunned bewilderment, hostile contempt or amused tolerance.

Admitting to an active interest in any aspect of the Benelux countries is, of course, strictly uncool. The obvious reply to such a question is "Why the hell not?" Belgium is unassuming, accessible and underrated, and what's more tempting than this? Antwerp, Belgium's third city, is home to a bar which sells no less than 800 different beers, all of which are eminently acceptable to those fine folk at Camra.

Both of us stumbled upon the joys of Belgian football during the early 80s in the heady days of Paffi, Gerets and Ceulemans, an era where overgrown facial hair, dropped shoulders and socks rolled around the ankles were the familiar sight. The Belgian national side established itself, in our eyes, as embodying the best aspects of British and Continental football: an intriguing mixture of skill and physical prowess coupled with an endearing defensive ineptness - attributes that have been the hallmark of *Les Diables Rouges* ever since.

Performances of the highest calibre lurk long in the memory: that could forget those bicentennial long-nighters of Mexico '86, especially Belgium's monumental clash with the USSR in Leon, where Guy Thys's heroes triumphed +3 after extra time, despite Igor Belanov's sublime hat-trick.

Club football was a natural progression, introducing us to the likes of Club Brugge and Standard Liege. Then on to Anderlecht, who lost to Spurs in the 1983-84 UEFA Cup final despite being the holders, before we plummeted into the realms

of obscurity where the deciphering of club names made frequent bed-time reading. Little did we know that we were developing early signs of Belgiumia - an intimate knowledge of just why Waterschei and Winterslag combined and the exact biological breakdown of RWDM Molenbeek, whilst attempting to explain why a mocked-by-many country the size of Belgium can boast such an inventive collection of club names in its footballing empire. Take a bow Erp Kwerps, Boom and Old Steamer Zeebrugge. Sad, but true.

Then, in 1988, there was KV Mechelen. A team that nobody outside of Belgium had heard of had gone and won themselves a major European trophy. We marvelled at the sight of Piet den Boer and the magical Israeli Eli Ohana, as Aad de Mo's valiant Cup-Winners' Cup-winning heroes defeated the mighty Ajax of Amsterdam at Sturaboerg's Stade de la Meinau. It was schoolboy stuff. And how could we ever forget the beard of the chairman, John Cordier?

Venturing on to Belgium's eclectic bunch of stadiums, such as De Bosuil, home to Royal Antwerp, the oldest club in Continental Europe with similarly aged facilities. Where else would you expect to find a large monolith containing 800 business seats rising behind a goal, emanating all the atmosphere of a concrete block? All the more bizarre when you consider several other parts of the ground are cordoned off. Charleroi's Mambour verges on the contemporary, with its pioneering use of neon advertising, while Mechelen's old-fashioned Achter de Kazerne continues to enchant us with its chocolate-box mixture of terracing and seats.

Then there are the delightful pre-match lunches at stadium-borders restaurants of pink décor where well-to-do

Belgians contemplate the proceedings over generous servings of oyster clams and accompanying shots of Duvel. The general atmosphere is continued inside the ground where trays loaded of Stella are often passed from front to back of overpopulated terraces throughout the duration of the match.

Belgian football has proven to be a hotbed of style indifference, with Cercle Brugge's yearly stroll down the carpark providing annual embarrassment. Excessive experimentation with the colour green has often resulted in outlandish designs more reminiscent of army camouflage uniforms. Unknowingly, AA Gent's 85-86 jerseys even resembled Tesco carrier bags. But if we discard Mechelen's current offering that doubles as a test transmission card (like their performances), we can thank Royal Antwerp for resurrecting style consciousness with their recent Ajax-influenced classic.

If all else fails why not indulge yourself in an entirely acceptable blood sport: that of hating Anderlecht, who are the Manchester United of the Belgian end of the Low Countries. As Waregem and Cercle fans, we congratulate ourselves on the fact that our clubs are unlikely ever to be in a position to buy their way to success, unlike *Les Maures*. Then again our clubs are unlikely to win anything in the foreseeable future.

But that won't stop us. Other fans may struggle to comprehend, but the lure of the world's finest chocolate is difficult to resist. And we haven't even mentioned the surreal underwear museum. Convinced? Then why not let a little piece of Belgium into your life. After all, everything is beautiful... in its own way.

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TODAY			
FA Cup First Round			
2 Arsenal v Derby	21 Ipswich v Blackpool	22 Charlton v Oxford Utd	22 Reading v Port Vale
3 Chelsea v Everton	21 Liverpool v Sheffield Wednesday	22 Chester v Bolton Utd	22 Exeter City v Barnet
4 Oldham v Tottenham	21 Middlesbrough v Leeds	22 Chesterfield v Scarbrough	22 Huddersfield v Walsley
5 Luton v Shrewsbury	21 Southampton v Aston Villa	22 Walsley v Peterborough	22 Barnet v Wycombe
6 Middlesbrough v Leeds	21 Sunderland v Wimbledon	22 Walsley v Burnley	22 Walsley v Rochdale
7 Southampton v Aston Villa	21 Sunderland v Wimbledon	22 Walsley v Rochdale	22 Walsley v Rochdale
8 Sunderland v Wimbledon		22 Walsley v Rochdale	22 Walsley v Rochdale
Premier League			
1 Arsenal v Derby	21 Ipswich v Blackpool	22 Charlton v Oxford Utd	22 Reading v Port Vale
2 Arsenal v Derby	21 Ipswich v Blackpool	22 Charlton v Oxford Utd	22 Reading v Port Vale
3 Chelsea v Everton	21 Liverpool v Sheffield Wednesday	22 Chester v Bolton Utd	22 Exeter City v Barnet
4 Oldham v Tottenham	21 Middlesbrough v Leeds	22 Chesterfield v Scarbrough	22 Huddersfield v Walsley
5 Luton v Shrewsbury	21 Southampton v Aston Villa	22 Walsley v Peterborough	22 Barnet v Wycombe
6 Middlesbrough v Leeds	21 Southampton v Aston Villa	22 Walsley v Peterborough	22 Barnet v Wycombe
7 Southampton v Aston Villa	21 Sunderland v Wimbledon	22 Walsley v Burnley	22 Walsley v Rochdale
8 Sunderland v Wimbledon		22 Walsley v Rochdale	22 Walsley v Rochdale
Scottish First Division			
1 Celtic v Dundee	21 Dundee v Celtic	22 Dundee v Celtic	22 Dundee v Celtic
2 Dundee v Celtic	21 Dundee v Celtic	22 Dundee v Celtic	22 Dundee v Celtic
3 Dundee v Celtic	21 Dundee v Celtic	22 Dundee v Celtic	22 Dundee v Celtic
4 Dundee v Celtic	21 Dundee v Celtic	22 Dundee v Celtic	22 Dundee v Celtic
5 Dundee v Celtic	21 Dundee v Celtic	22 Dundee v Celtic	22 Dundee v Celtic
6 Dundee v Celtic	21 Dundee v Celtic	22 Dundee v Celtic	22 Dundee v Celtic
7 Dundee v Celtic	21 Dundee v Celtic	22 Dundee v Celtic	22 Dundee v Celtic
8 Dundee v Celtic	21 Dundee v Celtic	22 Dundee v Celtic	22 Dundee v Celtic
Scottish Second Division			
1 Livingston v Stirling	21 Livingston v Stirling	22 Livingston v Stirling	22 Livingston v Stirling
2 Livingston v Stirling	21 Livingston v Stirling	22 Livingston v Stirling	22 Livingston v Stirling
3 Livingston v Stirling	21 Livingston v Stirling	22 Livingston v Stirling	22 Livingston v Stirling
4 Livingston v Stirling	21 Livingston v Stirling	22 Livingston v Stirling	22 Livingston v Stirling
5 Livingston v Stirling	21 Livingston v Stirling	22 Livingston v Stirling	22 Livingston v Stirling
6 Livingston v Stirling	21 Livingston v Stirling	22 Livingston v Stirling	22 Livingston v Stirling
7 Livingston v Stirling	21 Livingston v Stirling	22 Livingston v Stirling	22 Livingston v Stirling
8 Livingston v Stirling	21 Livingston v Stirling	22 Livingston v Stirling	22 Livingston v Stirling
Scottish Third Division			
1 Ross County v Montrose	21 Ross County v Montrose	22 Ross County v Montrose	22 Ross County v Montrose
2 Ross County v Montrose	21 Ross County v Montrose	22 Ross County v Montrose	22 Ross County v Montrose
3 Ross County v Montrose	21 Ross County v Montrose	22 Ross County v Montrose	22 Ross County v Montrose
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7 Ross County v Montrose	21 Ross County v Montrose	22 Ross County v Montrose	22 Ross County v Montrose
8 Ross County v Montrose	21 Ross County v Montrose	22 Ross County v Montrose	22 Ross County v Montrose
Tommy's Scottish Cup First Round			
1 Albion Rovers v Forfar	21 Albion Rovers v Forfar	22 Albion Rovers v Forfar	22 Albion Rovers v Forfar
2 Albion Rovers v Forfar	21 Albion Rovers v Forfar	22 Albion Rovers v Forfar	22 Albion Rovers v Forfar
3 Albion Rovers v Forfar	21 Albion Rovers v Forfar	22 Albion Rovers v Forfar	22 Albion Rovers v Forfar
4 Albion Rovers v Forfar	21 Albion Rovers v Forfar	22 Albion Rovers v Forfar	22 Albion Rovers v Forfar
5 Albion Rovers v Forfar	21 Albion Rovers v Forfar	22 Albion Rovers v Forfar	22 Albion Rovers v Forfar
6 Albion Rovers v Forfar	21 Albion Rovers v Forfar	22 Albion Rovers v Forfar	22 Albion Rovers v Forfar
7 Albion Rovers v Forfar	21 Albion Rovers v Forfar	22 Albion Rovers v Forfar	22 Albion Rovers v Forfar
8 Albion Rovers v Forfar	21 Albion Rovers v Forfar	22 Albion Rovers v Forfar	22 Albion Rovers v Forfar
Tomorrow			
FA Cup Premier League			
1 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	21 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	22 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	22 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)
2 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	21 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	22 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	22 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)
3 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	21 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	22 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	22 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)
4 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	21 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	22 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	22 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)
5 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	21 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	22 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	22 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)
6 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	21 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	22 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	22 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)
7 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	21 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	22 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	22 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)
8 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	21 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	22 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)	22 West Ham v Manchester Utd (4.0)
Nationwide League First Division			
1 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	21 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	22 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	22 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)
2 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	21 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	22 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	22 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)
3 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	21 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	22 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	22 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)
4 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	21 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	22 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	22 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)
5 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	21 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	22 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	22 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)
6 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	21 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	22 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	22 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)
7 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	21 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	22 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	22 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)
8 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	21 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	22 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)	22 West Bromwich v Bolton (1.0)

Birmingham boosted by Furlong

Birmingham City expect to have their record signing, Paul Furlong, back to lead their attack in today's First Division game with Grimsby at St Andrew's as the manager of the month.

Trevor Francis, looks to boost his side's promotion quest. Furlong, signed from Chelsea for £1.5m in the summer, missed the midweek home draw with Barnsley because of a leg injury suffered at Norwich last weekend. With Paul Devlin still suspended and Ricky O'Neil ineffective up front against the Tykes, it could mean Furlong linking up with the transfer-listed Mike Newell.

Newell, available after a three-match suspension, is back in contention after Bolton, pulled out of the running to sign the former Everton and Blackburn player. "As far as I am concerned the deal's now dead," Francis said. "Mike is free to play after suspension but I haven't decided whether he will be in my plans."

Francis added: "The team spirit in the camp is terrific now - but we are still in the process of building this team. We are not yet the finished article."

Manchester City's goalkeeper, Martin Margetson, who feared he had broken his leg after being carried off in the first minute of Sunday's defeat at Wolves, is set to face Bradford at Maine Road. Tests only revealed severe bruising and swelling to both knees and he has been able to resume full training. City's caretaker manager, Phil Neal, who has new signing Neil Heaney fit to return, said: "The lads are in good spirit and we need to start winning matches. That will help everyone's confidence."

The leaders, Bolton, are not in action until tomorrow, when they will be looking to end a run of four successive draws when they visit West Bromwich Albion.

